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SERMONS

BY

H. P. LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.

CANON OF ST. PAUL'S

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NEW YORK
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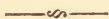
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Sermons

BY THE

LATE REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Canon of St. Paul's.



THE VALUE OF SCRIPTURE.*

“For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me, for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”—ROM. xv. 3, 4.

WHEN the Apostle makes his general statement, “Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,” he is, after his wont, answering an objection which he does not notice. The objection which he feels instinctively will arise in the minds of some of his readers is that portions of the Old Testament, “things written aforetime,” as he calls them, and particularly the passage which he has just quoted, are not so well suited for Christian instruction as he has assumed to be the case. His purpose in making the quotation, to which we have just listened, was to bring about a more brotherly feeling than existed at the time between the two great divisions of the Roman Church,—the converts from Judaism and the converts from heathenism. There was a great deal of friction between these classes which became especially apparent in their differences respecting the kinds of food that might rightly

* Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, December 8th, being the Second Sunday in Advent, 1839.

be eaten, and the days which ought to be observed as holy by individual Christians, and apart from any regulations of the Church of Christ on these subjects. The Jewish converts, who were probably, in point of number, the minority, fearing that some legal defect would probably attach to any meat that they might buy in the public markets at Rome, took refuge in vegetarianism,—“He that is weak eateth herbs;” and they also clung to the observance of days and seasons which they had held sacred in their old Jewish life. With all this the converts from heathenism had no sympathy, and they were disposed to treat with a rough intolerance the scruples of men whom they thought of and spoke of as weak. The Apostle, Jew that he was by birth, held that the converts from heathenism were substantially right in their view of the case, but he did not approve of their scornful and impatient way of urging it. They took delight in words and acts which caused much distress to the Jewish converts; they were for stamping out observances which their tastes and their reason condemned. The Apostle held that these private observances were of no importance excepting as representing a pure intention of serving God, and that the strength of mind on which the Gentile converts prided themselves ought to have enabled them to enter considerably into the point of view of their Jewish opponents. “We,” he tells us, “that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” And then he adds, as a reason, that “even Christ pleased not Himself.” He might have illustrated this, we think, by referring to many acts in our Lord’s life, and especially to His voluntary death and passion on the Cross, but he does refer to a passage in the sixty-ninth Psalm: “As it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.”

Now this Psalm is ascribed to David by the inscription, and also by St. Paul himself in another quotation which he makes from it, and it suits David’s circumstances during his flight

from Jerusalem at the time of Absalom's rebellion more accurately than any known set of circumstances in the lifetime of Jeremiah or of any of those writers after the exile to which some critics would nowadays assign it. But, although the Psalm was David's, and in it he is describing his own troubles, a Jewish Christian would not have been surprised at St. Paul's applying the words to our Lord Jesus Christ, for he would have known that the Jewish doctors, or some of them, had already understood these words of the promised Messiah; and as he believed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, he had no difficulty in following the Apostle when the Apostle used David's account of his own troubles as an account of the sorrows of Jesus. He would have felt with the Apostle that, if it was true that the rebukes of the enemies of the reign of God in Israel fell on David, who in his day represented it, much more true, in a later age, was this of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who pleased not Himself, but endured sorrow and reproach for the sake of the Father and to do His will. A Jewish Christian then would have felt no difficulty about the quotation, but with the converts from heathenism the case would have been very different. Whether he was an Italian or a Greek settled in Rome, but especially if he was a Greek, he would have had many difficulties to get over in accepting the Old Testament at all: it would have been foreign to his whole mode of thought. He could have understood the attraction of the teaching and of the redeeming love of our Lord and Saviour, but he would only have accepted the Old Testament on our Lord's authority, and would have doubted, at any rate at first, whether he, with his mental antecedents, had very much to learn from it, and therefore St. Paul's use of it on this and other occasions would have seemed to him to be arbitrary and unintelligible. "Why," he would have asked, "why should a Psalm written by David, and referring to David's personal circumstances more than a thousand years before, be thus used to portray a feature of the life and character of the Lord Jesus?" This, then, was the

difficulty which St. Paul had in his eye, and he meets it by laying down a broad principle which includes a great deal else besides. "Whatsoever things," he says—and therefore, among the rest, this very sixty-ninth Psalm—"whatsoever things were written aforetime, in the Jewish Scriptures, were written for the learning or instruction of us Christians, that we, through the patience which those Scriptures enjoin, and through the comfort which they administer, might have hope in this life and beyond it."

Now, let us consider some few of the truths which this statement of the Apostle seems to imply.

It implies, first of all, at the very least, the trustworthiness of the Old Testament,—I say its trustworthiness; I do not for the moment go so far as to say its inspiration. Unless a book, or a man, be trustworthy it is impossible to feel confidence in it or in him, and confidence in an instructor is the very first condition of receiving instruction to any good purpose. Now, if this be so, it shows that the Apostle would have had nothing to do with any estimate of the books of the Old Testament which is fatal to belief in their trustworthiness. We may have noticed, perhaps, that when estimates of this kind are put forward, as is occasionally the case, they are commonly prefaced by the observation that the Christian Church has never defined what inspiration is, and it is left to be inferred that a book may still be in some singular sense inspired, although the statements which it contains are held by the critic to be opposed to the truth of history or to the truth of morals. It is no doubt true that no authoritative definition of what the inspiration of Holy Scripture is, of what it does and does not permit or imply, has ever been propounded by the Church of Christ, just as she has propounded no definition of the manner and effect of the action of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." Our Lord's words apply to an inspired book

not less than to a sanctified soul, but at the same time, both in the case of the soul and of the book, we can see that there are certain things which are inconsistent with the action of the Holy Spirit. Just as wilful sin is incompatible with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the soul, so inveracity is incompatible with the claim of a book to have been inspired by the Author of all truth. Thus, to take one example, in the Book of Deuteronomy many addresses are ascribed to Moses, and Moses himself describes a series of events of which he claims to have been an eye-witness. If, then, we are told that these addresses and these narratives were in reality unknown to the real Moses, that they were composed by some Jew or Israelite endowed with a high idealising faculty who lived many centuries after Moses, and this although the book was undoubtedly imposed upon the conscience of the Jewish people, at any rate after the exile, as being the work of Moses himself, we must observe that such a representation is irreconcilable, I do not say with the inspiration, but with the veracity of the book, which certainly claims to be one thing and is, according to the critic, quite another. Or if that striking prediction in the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel about King Antiochus Epiphanes was really, as some modern writers would have it, written after the events referred to, and thrown into the form of prediction, by some scribe of the second century before Christ, in order to arouse and encourage the Jews in their long struggle with the great Greeco-Syrian power, then it must be said that the book in which it occurs is not a trustworthy book: the writer is endeavouring to produce a national enthusiasm by means of a representation which he must have known to be contrary to fact. No doubt language and history are sciences which will have their say about the books of the Old Testament, and I am far from implying that their greatest masters are committed to the opinions just referred to. What we, you and I, have to take note of is this: that, unless there be such a thing as the inspiration of inveracity, we must choose between

the authority of some of our modern critical advisers and any belief whatever in the inspiration of the books which they handle after this fashion; nay, more, any belief in the permanent value of these books as sources of Christian or of human instruction. Nobody now expects to be instructed by the false Decretals, because all the world knows that they were composed in the ninth century with a view to building up the fabric of the Papal authority by making the first Bishops of Rome write as they might have written had they lived seven or eight hundred years later than they did. Certainly every trustworthy book is not inspired. Our booksellers' shops are full of honest books which make no pretence to inspiration, but a book claiming inspiration must at least be trustworthy, and a literature which is said to be inspired for the instruction of the world must not be held by its professed exponents and defenders to fall below the level which is required for the ordinary purposes of human intercourse. For Christians it will be enough to know that our Lord Jesus Christ has set the seal of His infallible sanction on the whole of the Old Testament. He found the Hebrew canon just as we have it in our hands to-day, and He treated it as an authority which was above discussion; nay, more, He went out of His way, if we may reverently speak thus, to sanction not a few portions of it which our modern scepticism too eagerly rejects. When He would warn His hearers against the danger of spiritual relapse, He bade them remember Lot's wife. When He would point out how worldly engagements may blind the soul to a coming judgment, He reminds them how men ate and drank, and married and were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered into the Ark and the Flood came and destroyed them all. When He would put His finger on a fact in past Jewish history which, by its admitted reality, would warrant belief in His own coming resurrection, He points to Jonah three days and three nights in the whale's belly. When, standing on the Mount of Olives with the Holy City at His feet, He would

quote a prophecy, the fulfilment of which would mark for His followers that its impending doom had at last arrived, He desires them to flee to the mountains when they "shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place." Are we to suppose that, in these and other references to the Old Testament, our Lord was only using what are called *ad hominem* arguments, or talking down to the level of a popular ignorance which He did not Himself share? Not to point out the inconsistency of this supposition with His character as a perfectly sincere religious Teacher, it may be observed that in the Sermon on the Mount He carefully marks off those features of the popular Jewish religion which He rejects, in a manner which makes it certain that, had He not Himself believed in the historic truth of the events and the persons to which He thus refers, He must have said so. But did He then share a popular belief which our higher knowledge has shown to be popular ignorance, and was He mistaken as to the worth of those Scriptures to which He so often and so confidently appealed? There are those who profess to bear the Christian name, and who do not shrink from saying as much as this; but they will find it difficult to persuade mankind that, if He could be mistaken on a matter of such strictly religious importance as this, He can be safely trusted about anything else. Yes, the trustworthiness of the Old Testament is, in fact, inseparable from the trustworthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we believe that He is the true Light of the World we shall resolutely close our ears against any suggestions of the falsehood of those Hebrew Scriptures which have received the stamp of His Divine authority.

But the Apostle's statement implies, next, that the Jewish Scriptures have a world-wide and an enduring value. They were written, he says, for our instruction, that is, for the instruction of the Apostolic Church which confidently aspired to embrace the world. They were written, then, for human

beings generally, in all places, at all times. Could such a statement be made about any other national literature, ancient or modern? Some instruction, no doubt, is to be gathered from the literature of every people. The products of the human mind in all its phases, and in circumstances the most unpromising, have generally something to tell us; but on the other hand, there is a great deal in the very finest uninspired literature that cannot be described as permanently or universally instructive—much in that of ancient Greece, much in that of our own country. And therefore, when the Apostle says of a great collection of books, of various characters, various dates, and on various subjects, embodying the legislation, the history, the poetry, the morals, of a small Eastern people, that whatsoever was contained in them had been set down for the instruction of men of another and a wider faith, living in a later age, and, by implication, for the instruction of all human beings, this is certainly, when we think of it, an astonishing assertion. Clearly, if the Apostle is to be believed, these books cannot be like any other similar collection of national laws, records, poems, proverbs. There must be in them some quality or qualities which warrant this lofty estimate. And here we may observe that as books rise in the scale of excellence, whatever their authorship or their outward form, they tend towards exhibiting a permanence and universality of interest. They rise above the local and personal accidents of their production, they show qualities which address themselves to the mind and heart of the human race. This is, as we all know, the case, within limits, with our own Shakespeare. The ascendancy of his genius is clearly independent of the circumstances of his life, of which indeed we know scarcely anything, and of the dramatic form into which he threw his mighty thoughts. He has been read and re-read, commented on and discussed, by nine generations of Englishmen. His phrases have passed into the language, so that we are constantly quoting him without knowing it. His authority as an analyst and exponent of

human nature has steadily grown with the advancing years ; nay, despite the eminently English form of his writings, German critics have claimed him as being, in virtue of the form of his thoughts, a virtual countryman of theirs, and even the people of the Latin races, who would have more difficulty in understanding him, have not been slow to offer him the homage of their sincere sympathy and admiration.

And yet, by what an interval is Shakespeare parted from the books of the Hebrew Scriptures ? His great dramatic creations we feel after all are only the workmanship of a very shrewd human observer, with the limitations of a human point of view, and with the restricted moral authority which is all that the highest human genius can claim. But here is a book which provides for human nature as a whole, which makes this provision with an insight and a comprehensiveness which does not belong—I dare to say it—to the mind or heart of the most gifted man. Could any merely human author have stood the test that the Old Testament has stood ? Think what it has been to the Jewish people through the tragic vicissitudes of their wonderful history ; think what it has been to Christendom. For nineteen centuries it has formed the larger part of the religious handbook of the Church of Christ. It has shaped Christian hopes, it has largely governed Christian legislation, it has supplied the language for Christian prayer and praise. The noblest, the saintliest souls in Christendom have one after another fed their souls on it, or even on little fragments of it, taking a verse, and shutting the spiritual ear to everything else, and, in virtue of the concentrated intensity with which they have thus sought for days, and weeks, and months, and years, to penetrate the inmost secrets of that one fragment of its consecrated language, rising even to heroic heights of effort and of endurance. Throughout the Christian centuries the Old Testament has been a mine constantly worked, and is far to-day from being exhausted. Well might the old poet cry, “ I am as glad of Thy Word as one that findeth great spoils ;

the law of the Lord is an undefiled law converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure and giveth wisdom to the simple ; the statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure and giveth light unto the eyes ; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Even those parts of the Old Testament which seem at first sight less promising have some instruction to give us if we will only look out for it. Those genealogies, apparently so long and so dry, which occur constantly in the historical books, may remind us, when we examine the names attentively, sometimes of the awful responsibility which attaches to the transmission of the gift of life, of a type of character which we have ourselves perchance modified to another and perhaps a distant generation. Or sometimes they suggest the care with which all that bore on the human ancestry of our Lord and Saviour was treasured up unconsciously, in not a few cases, in the records of the people of revelation. Those accounts too of fierce war and indiscriminate slaughter, such as attended the extermination of the Canaanites, suggest the implacable thoroughness with which we should endeavour to extirpate the sins which may long have settled in our hearts. Those minute ritual directions of the Law, which might at first read like the rubrics of a system which had for ever past away, should, as they might, bring before us first one and then another aspect of that to which assuredly they point, the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But this last illustration suggests a third fact which is implied in the Apostle's statement—it suggests the truth that a second or deeper sense of Scripture constantly underlies the primary, literal, superficial sense. That a narrative should have two senses, one which it suggests to the reader at first sight, and another which is deeper, but which is only discovered on reflection, may at first sight strike us as strange, but Scripture itself tells us that this is the case. Nobody of course would expect to find a second sense in an uninspired book, however well written. In Lord Macaulay's "History of England," for instance, we read what he has to say about the events which he describes, and there is an end of it, but this is not true of the Old Testament Scriptures. If we go, as Christians surely should go, to the New Testament in order to

discover how we should read the Old, we find ourselves constantly guided to search for a second, spiritual sense which underlies the letter. Thus the account in the Book of Genesis of Abraham's relations with Hagar and Sarah, with Ishmael and with Isaac, might at first seem to have no further object than that of displaying the historical source of the relations which existed in later ages between Israel and certain of the desert tribes; but, if we turn to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle bids us penetrate much deeper, and see in these two ancient mothers the Jewish and the Christian covenants, or the Jewish and the Christian Churches, and in their children here the spiritual slaves of the Mosaic law, and there the enfranchised sons of the mother of us all, the Christian Jerusalem. And, in like manner, St. Paul teaches the Corinthians in his first Epistle to see in the Exodus from Egypt, and in the events which followed it, not a bare series of ancient historical occurrences, but the foreshadowing of Christian privileges and of Christian failings. These things, he says, happened to them for types or patterns of something beyond, and thus they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. These are but two out of many illustrations that might be given; and so in the early Church there arose a great school of interpreters which concerned itself almost exclusively with the discovery and the exhibition of the second sense of Scripture. That some of these interpreters may have made mistakes, whether from fancifulness or exaggeration, is probable enough, but the principle on which they went to work was taught them by the Apostles. They felt the depth and the resources of the Divine Word; they had in this wealth of meaning a sort of sensible proof of its inspiration. They dwelt upon the fact that the Divine Mind sees each event, not as we do, singly, but in relation to other events which, at whatever distance of time, would have some sort of correspondence with it, sees the spiritual in the material, sees the eternal in the temporal, sees that which to man is future in that which to man is present, since to the Divine intelligence all is always present, and there is neither past nor future. On some such considerations as these does the doctrine of a second sense of Scripture rest; but in any case it is warranted by the distinct teaching of the New Testament, and it alone enables us to understand how

some difficult parts of the Old Testament can be written for our learning at all. Take, for instance, the Song of Solomon. Taken in its literal sense, the Song of Solomon describes scenes in the court of Solomon which might doubtless be paralleled in those of other Eastern princes, but which hardly correspond to the Apostle's description of being "written for our instruction, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope;" but if, with the Jewish Talmud itself, and with an overwhelming majority of Christian interpreters, we not only recognise a second sense lying beneath the letter of this book, but also understand that this second sense is much more important for us to know than the literal or primary sense; if, as the headings of our authorised version suggest, we see in the "Beloved" our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the "Bride" either the Church or the Christian soul, then the book becomes a repertory of the very highest spiritual truth which, so far as we can see, could hardly have been adequately expressed in any other form. The necessity of recognising some such sense in the book has been almost universally admitted by Christian interpreters, and those modern schools or groups of scholars who have rejected it have generally ended by abandoning, more or less decisively, the teaching value of the book altogether. Indeed, the neglect of this secondary and spiritual sense of Scripture has sometimes led Christians to misapply the Old Testament very seriously. Thus, for instance, both the soldiers of Raymond of Toulouse, who made war on the Albigenses in the thirteenth century, and the Puritans, who made war on the Church in the seventeenth century, appealed to the early wars of the Israelites as a sanction even for indiscriminate slaughter. They forgot that the promulgation of the law of charity by our Lord had made such an appeal impossible for Christians, they forgot that most instructive scene outside the Samaritan village which had refused Him a welcome, and on which two of His first followers would fain have had Him call down fire from heaven, and His significant rebuke, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." Dwelling on the letter of the narrative of the Book of Joshua, they missed its true and lasting, but deeper import,—the eternal witness which it bears to God's hatred of moral evil, even though veiled beneath a comparatively advanced material civilisation, and the duty of making war—

incessant, implacable, exterminating war upon those passions which too easily wreck their Jericho or their Ai within the Christian soul itself, and are only conquered by resolute perseverance and courage.

And this second sense of Scripture is especially instructive as a guide to the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the end, as of the Law, so of the whole of the Old Testament, to every one that believeth. No doubt the literal sense of the Old Testament often points to Him. Psalms like the 22^d or the 110th, prophecies such as Isaiah's of the virgin birth and of the Man of Sorrows, can properly be referred to no one else, but there is much which has a primary reference to some saint, or hero, or event of the day, which yet in its deeper significance points on to Him; and this depends not on any arbitrary or fanciful feeling, but on the principle that He is the recapitulation, as an early Christian writer expressed it, the recapitulation of all that is exalted in humanity,—that all that is true, heroic, saintly, pathetic, and that we see elsewhere only in fragments, meets in Him as the perfect Representative of the race. Only when this is understood do we read the Old Testament with Christian eyes, read it as the first Christians were wont to read it; only then do we understand the full meaning and purpose of much which else is veiled from our sight of those great deliverances from Egypt and from Babylon—the foreshadowing of a greater deliverance beyond,—all those elaborate rites of purification and sacrifice, which have no meaning apart from the one Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, all that succession of saints and heroes who, with all their imperfections, point onwards and upwards to One Who dignifies their feebler and broken lives by making them in not a few respects anticipations of His glorious Self; only then do we understand the truth of that profound saying of the great Augustine that “as the Old Testament is patent in the New, so the New Testament is latent in the Old.”

The second Sunday in Advent might almost be called the yearly festival of Holy Scripture. The collect for the day is found within the covers of more than half of our Bibles, and it is based upon the words which we have been considering, the words of the Epistle: but while St. Paul, in these words, is treating only of the Old Testament, the collect expands his

meaning when it reminds us that all Holy Scriptures are written for our learning,—the New Testament not less than the Old. Well would it be for you and for me if we could take the truth seriously to heart, and lay out our time so as to act upon it. The Bible is indeed the most interesting book in the world, to the poet, to the historian, to the philosopher, to the student of human nature, to the lover of the picturesque and of the marvellous, to the archæologist, to the man of letters, to the man of affairs. To each of these it has much to say that he will find nowhere else, but none of these, if he confines himself to his special interest, will secure the gift, the gift of gifts, which the Bible was really intended to convey. When you entered this great temple of Jesus Christ this afternoon there were many separate subjects which it might have suggested to you,—the faultless proportions of the building, the materials of which it is composed, the skill and genius of the architect, the monuments of the dead that everywhere meet the eye, the events in the history of our Church and country which have been witnessed within its walls or on its site; and then again the accessories of Divine service, the various pieces of distinctly religious furniture in the church, the beauty of the music, the order and the sequence of Psalm and Lesson and Creed and Anthem,—yet these are all, the highest to the lowest, but details if regarded with reference to that supreme purpose which this cathedral itself, and all that is in it, and all that takes place in it, should certainly suggest. That purpose is nothing less than leading each soul, aye, and a great company of souls in unison, to ascend to true communion with Him Who is the Infinite and the Eternal; to leave behind them, to escape from, to break, to trample upon, as the need of each may be, those earthly allurements and fetters which would seduce or hold them back from the true end of their existence; to forget for a while the outer world and life, its pleasures, its annoyances, its intrigues, its passions, its disappointments, its sorrows, its ambitions, its jealousies, its splendours, its degradations; and to rise in the prophet's phrase on the wings of eagles, towards the Sun of the moral world, the Father, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier of the human soul. And, when we take up the Bible, we enter in spirit a far more splendid temple, which it needed some fifteen centuries to build, and the variety and the resource of which

distances all comparison with this,—a temple built not out of stone and marbles, but with human words, and yet enshrining within it—for the comfort and warning, for the correction and the encouragement of every human soul—no other and no less than the Holy and Eternal Spirit. Of that temple the Old Testament is the nave, with its side aisles of Psalm and Prophecy, and the Gospels are the Choir or Chancel, the last Gospel perhaps the very sanctuary itself, whilst around and behind are the Apostolical Epistles and the Apocalypse, each of them a gem of beauty, each supplying some indispensable feature to the splendid whole. With what joy should we daily enter that temple; with what profound reverence should we cross its threshold; with what care should we mark and note, where nothing is meaningless, each feature, each ornament that decorates wall, or pillar, or window, or roof; how high should we set our expectation of the blessings that may be secured within it; how open and yet how submissive should be our hearts to the voices—they are not of this world—that might touch, and change, and purify them. As we drift on in the swift, relentless current of time towards the end of life—as days, and weeks, and months, and years follow each other in breathless haste, and we reflect now and then for a moment that, at any rate for us, much of this earthly career has passed irrevocably, what are the interests, what are the thoughts, aye, what the books, that command our attention? what do we read and leave unread? what time do we give to the Bible? No other book, let us be sure of it, can equally avail to prepare us for that which lies before us; for the unknown anxieties and sorrows which are, sooner or later, the portion of most men and women, for the gradual approach of death, for the passage into the unseen world, for the sights and sounds that will then burst upon us, for the period—be it long or short—of waiting and preparation, for the throne, the face, of the Eternal Judge. Looking back from that world, how shall we desire to have made the most of our best guide to it, how shall we grudge the hours we have wasted on that which only belongs to time! “O Lord, Thy Word endureth for ever in heaven, Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another. If my delight had not been in Thy Law, I should have perished in my trouble. I will never forget Thy commandments, for with them Thou hast quickened me.”

CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO HIS DISCIPLES.*

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.”—MATT. xxviii. 18-19.

A REFERENCE to our Lord's great charge to His disciples can hardly fail to be welcome on a day like this, for the words furnish the warrant for the solemn scene which has taken place in this Cathedral this very morning, when the Chief Pastor of this Diocese, exercising the most solemn prerogative of his high office, has admitted a number of young men to lower and higher degrees in the ministry of the Church of God. Moreover, the words encourage and invigorate that desire for the extension of Christ's kingdom as a condition precedent to His second coming in glory which is so natural, nay, may it not be said, so inevitable a feeling in every Christian soul. Across the triumphs and the failures of well-nigh nineteen centuries the spiritual ear still catches the accents of the charge on the mountain in Galilee, and as we listen we note that neither lapse of time nor change of circumstances have impaired their solemn and enduring force. “Make disciples of all the nations.” It is a precept which, if it ever had binding virtue, must have it at this moment for all who believe in the Divine Speaker's right to impose it. It must bind you and me as definitely and as constrainingly as the first disciples. And what a precept it is: “Go, make disciples of all the nations—of all the nations, not only of the race of Israel who have ancient writings, prophecies, a revelation, that will make your work comparatively easy; not only of the Semitic races, which will at least understand the manner, the temper, the bearing of the Prophet of Nazareth; not only of the civilised nations of the world in which law, and order, and the courtesies of social life, and speculations on the great problems of existence, may be expected to welcome an influence that will so powerfully assist and reinforce them; not of the Greek and Roman world alone; not only of the race of mankind which is now within your reach,—*all the nations.*”

* Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, on Sunday afternoon, December 22nd, being the Fourth Sunday in Advent, 1889.

57 No race of man has not a claim on you, however remote, degraded, fierce, repulsive it may be. You are debtors to the Greeks and the Barbarians, to the well-to-do and to the poor, to the accomplished and to the very ignorant, for you bear in your hearts and hands that which all need. You are the ambassadors of a charity which knows no distinction between the claimants on its bounty, and no frontiers save those of the race of men. And such a precept implies, among other things, that there was a grave necessity for imposing and obeying it. For let us suppose—it is a dreadful supposition for a Christian to suggest, but I put it in order to clear the ground—let us suppose that the religion taught by our Lord was of purely human origin, a natural product of the human mind, in a particular set of circumstances, at a given stage of its development. In that case what would have been the justification of an attempt to impose it on the human race? How could the mere outgrowth—or, if you please, the manufacture—of one human mind, or a set of human minds, be imposed upon all others without intolerable impertinence and pretension? Would not other men also think that they too could grow or create a religion better suited to themselves, better calculated to meet their wants and to consult their prejudices. “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel; may I not wash in them and be clean?” This is the natural language of the human soul warmly attached to the traditions of family and country, and not yet conscious of being face to face with a creed that alone has come from God. Certainly when a religion claims the attention and the allegiance of the race of man it does claim, by implication, to have come from God, and, before our Lord desired His disciples to make disciples of all the nations, He had been already declared the Son of God with power, so far as His higher holy nature was concerned, by the resurrection from the dead.

But His command was further based on two motives of commanding power,—the first, the needs of human beings on all matters of the first importance. They lived in a mental darkness, the gloom of which was scarcely relieved by the fitful light, here and there, of some speculative philosophy. Their affections were given to objects which were constantly unworthy and degrading. Their wills were so warped and weakened that not seldom in the midst of the very highest

culture they seemed to have lost all sense of a moral law. Those who have read through the dialogues of Plato, and who have studied the life, and not merely the teachings, of Socrates, will understand the completeness of the moral failure of Heathenism even at its very best. What it was elsewhere can too easily be imagined; what it is at this moment we may learn, for instance, from recent accounts of the condition of Central Africa, or from the instructive narrative of his four years' life amongst the aborigines of Queensland, in Australia, which has lately been given to the world by the Norwegian traveller Lumholtz. Without Christ, the world lay of old, and it lies now, in darkness—darkness intellectual and moral—in the shadow of death.

And thus a second motive for the precept was found in what our Lord had proposed to do, or had already done, for man. As the Light of the World, He illumined its darkness with clear and definite teaching about God, about sin, about eternity. As the Mediator between God and man, He expiated on the Cross the sins which had estranged men from God. As the Model and Author of a new life in man, purifying his heart and invigorating his will, He sent His Spirit to secure to man, both otherwise and especially through assigned channels, such as the sacraments, such contact with His perfect humanity, as should enable fallen human beings to put on that "new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And the source of all this was the self-humiliation of Him, Who, being in the form of God, did not deem His equality with God a prize to be jealously clutched at, but emptied Himself of His glory and took on Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

That gift of Himself by the Eternal Son is the true secret of missionary, as of all other, effort in the Church of Christ. "If He has done this for me, what can I do for Him?" is the question which the Christian soul is constantly asking itself. It anticipates the precept: "Make disciples of all the nations." Indeed, my brethren, it is not too much to say that an interest in promoting obedience to our Lord's command, "Go, make disciples of all the nations," is a fair test of the genuineness of a man's faith in Jesus Christ. There are many forms of

Christian activity, good and useful in themselves, and warmly approving themselves to good men, as to which it would be quite an exaggeration to say as much as this. A man may be a firm believer in our Lord without taking interest in a great many questions of Biblical criticism, or the relations between Christianity and physical science or social questions. It is otherwise with the extension of our Lord's kingdom among men. A good Christian cannot be other than eager on the subject. Not only his sense of what is due to the Lord Who bought him, but also his natural sense of justice, his intimate persuasion that he has no right to monopolise, to withhold from others, the privileges, the prospects, which are the joy of his own inmost life. When he finds comfort in the power of prayer, when he looks forward with humble confidence to death, when he enjoys the blessed gift of inward peace—peace between the soul and its God, peace between the soul's various powers and faculties—he cannot but ask himself the question : “Do I not owe it to the millions who have no part in these priceless blessings that I should do what I can myself, or through others, to extend to them a share in this smile of the universal Father which is the joy and the consolation of my life? Can I possibly neglect the command to help in the work of making disciples of all the nations?”

But if the duty thus enjoined is a necessary, it is also a difficult, one. A serious conviction of long standing on any subject lodged in any human mind is not easily displaced in favour of a new one, and religious convictions, however fallen and degraded may be the religion to which they belong, are displaced with greater difficulty than any other convictions. They strike their roots deeper into the texture of the soul; they are bound up, as are no others, with the great events of life, with the sense of duty to home and country, above all, with the memory of the dead. Those who have passed away have professed that creed, they have practised those rites, they have enjoined, it may be, with a dying breath, loyal adherence to them on the son or the daughter who is now asked to exchange them for another faith. It is impossible to refuse a certain sort of sympathy to some of the nobler specimens of the last adherents of Paganism in the old Roman world, men who lived after the victory of Christianity was already ascertained, and who clung, with a courage worthy of a better cause,

to the old superstitions,—men like Symmachus, struggling to retain the time-honoured association of the Senate with the ancient religion of the Empire, or like Marcellinus, retiring to his Dalmatian home to mourn in secret over a change which it was no longer in his power to avert. Wrong as these men were in their aim, false as we Christians know was their creed, they still represent the loyalty of the human soul to influences which powerfully sway the heart and the conscience. The forces which are ranged against the ambassador of truth are by no means all of them bad. Some of them are the very forces which in a faithful Christian are among the stoutest allies of his creed,—reverence for the past, love of the departed, the natural feelings of gratitude, the promptings, not only of affectionateness, but of that self-distrust which regards, not so much change as our capacity to measure the value of change, with deep-seated suspicion. And, furthermore, every old religion represents, and is linked to, a vast mass of vested interests, and these, irrespectively of the truth or falsehood of the religion, are strenuously opposed to the advocates of change. Many of these interests have, properly speaking, nothing to do with religion itself—they are of a purely material character; but an instinct of self-preservation leads them to associate themselves with the religion which supports them, and to take its part when it appears to be threatened. You will remember how, during St. Paul's mission at Ephesus, the jewellers round the great temple of the goddess Diana saw what would follow on the success of the Apostle: "A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen, whom he called together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear that, not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which be made with hands, so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." And indeed this, or a kindred motive, would have influenced some of the better Roman Emperors who lent their hands to the bad work of persecuting the Church of Christ. They saw in Christianity

a force which threatened the existing order of things with serious change and dislocation, and they apprehended that this meant weakness and perhaps ruin for the great political and social system over which they presided. They did not see far enough to see beyond the horizon of imminent change. They did not perceive—how should they?—that, even in the things of this world, the religion of our Lord is a much greater constructive force than any other, that, if you give it time, it will more than replace whatever it may remove. Thus missionary effort always has to reckon with the alarm and the opposition of a respectable but mistaken kind of conservatism, to say nothing of the mass of baser passions which are permanently ranged against any setting forth of the righteousness of God.

The difficulties of the Christian missionary are always and inevitably great, and the sense of their magnitude has at times betrayed portions of the Church of Christ into the employment of illegitimate means of extending our Lord's kingdom. Of these, the first is the method of force. "Why should you not oblige people to do and to be"—so men have reasoned—"that which is, after all, for their truest benefit? Mere savages do not, they cannot, understand an argument; your appeals to the moral sense, to the presumptions which arise from the nature of God, to the history and the origin of Christianity, are lost upon them; you had better treat them like children. A child is managed by the application of force until he is old enough to understand the obligation of principle. Did not the Most Merciful Himself say in one of His parables, 'Compel them to come in, that My house may be filled'? and is it not a mistaken delicacy, doomed by anticipation to failure, to deal with these grown-up children as if they were thoughtful men open to the force of facts and of persuasion? Is it not better to exert a little violence for which unborn generations will bless your name?" So reasoned Charlemagne with the advisers who accompanied him as his great armies advanced across the Rhine to the conquest of the Saxons in the year of our Lord 772. The Saxons, as you know, were the first cousins of our own ancestors, and history obliges us to admit that of all the barbarous races that peopled ancient Europe none were more ferocious, none more attached to the brutalities of their ancestral religion, especially to the practice of human sacrifices, than they

were. Before Charlemagne advanced, Lebuin, a missionary born in England but of Saxon blood, a man whose speech was still understood by his German kinsmen, appeared in the midst of a great Saxon Diet, when the chiefs of the nation were engaged in an act of solemn worship and sacrifice, and proclaimed himself the messenger of the one true God, who had made heaven and earth, denounced the folly and the impiety of the rites of which he was a witness, spoke of Jesus Christ and His redemption, and urged repentance, faith, and baptism. The Saxons listened for a while in silence, and then Lebuin went on to say that, unless they obeyed the Heavenly message, God would send a mighty monarch from across the Rhine who would lay waste their land with fire and sword, and would reduce them to serfdom. The audience was at once aroused to fury, and Lebuin only escaped from a terrible death through the intervention of an aged chieftain. But Charlemagne came, as Lebuin said he would come ; he came once and again, and by no means always for purely religious reasons. Behind his great armies of Franks there followed a band of Christian clergy, forbidden to bear arms, but ready to exercise their ministry as soon as victory had declared for their Master. The conquered Saxons accepted Christianity, they submitted to baptism as a condition of peace, and the devout Saxon poet of a rather later day contemplates Charlemagne at the Day of Judgment as nearly associated with the Apostles themselves, while hosts of Saxon proselytes follow him within the gates of heaven ; but the poet does not inquire how many of them had obeyed the persuasions, not of the Christian missionary, but of the sword of the Frankish emperor. The method of force was the expedient of zealous men living in a rude age, anxious for results which require patience and time, impatient of delays and of resistance.

In these days we are in no danger of adopting the method of force. There is no particular credit in our not doing so, since it is opposed in a dozen of ways to the prevailing temper of the time. Had we lived in the eighth century we should probably have assisted, or at least have applauded, Charlemagne: as it is, we too often fall back on another method which is more congenial to a generation whose temptations lie in an opposite direction. This method is the method of concession. Instead of attempting to coerce human souls into conversion, the men

of our day take great trouble to explain that conversion involves very little, only a very few new convictions, only a very slight change of life. We dwell at great length on, we exaggerate, the amount of truth found in heathen religions; we attenuate, as far as we can, the distinctive truths of the religion of Christ. The sterner sayings of our Lord are thrown into the background or are explained away. He is presented as an easy-going Benevolence with no tangible quality of Justice belonging to Him. Sin is resolved into natural mistakes or into an imperfect form of virtue, the Atonement into a higher kind of sympathy, the action of the Holy Spirit into an indefinite impulse towards good, the sacraments into graceful symbols of spiritual processes which may or may not take place within us, the Bible into a book of the highest interest, but not to be trusted as a depository of absolute truth. The definiteness, the severity, the awe, the mysteriousness of the old Creed of Christendom, disappears in this new presentation of it, and with this—let us be sure of it—there also disappears the unveiling of an infinite love and the putting forth of an irresistible attraction. After all, what has this attenuated Christianity to say to the heathen? If a man should have the heart to become a missionary on behalf of so thin a creed as this, it may be predicted that he will not do very much for the men to whom he addresses himself. The heart of heathendom would say to him, "If this be all that you have to bring us, why approach us at all? Why not stay at home, and leave us to make the best we can of our own twilight without being distracted by yours?"

And a third and better method is the method of self-sacrifice. It exerts no compulsion, save such as the message of God's love, illustrated by the life of His ambassadors, will always exert over thousands of human hearts. It makes no surrender of any part of the gracious message which it bears, remembering Whose message it is. Its power in all ages lies in this, that it exhibits the love of the Redeemer at work in the lives and the efforts of the redeemed, and the double appeal of the message and the example which illustrates the message surely does its work in time. This self-sacrifice has been displayed in willingly undertaking unwelcome duty, in willingly submitting to hardships and sufferings from which human nature shrinks. From the days of the Apostles to our own day the annals of Christian missions have been the

annals of Christian heroism. St. Paul's account of his own ministry has been again and again repeated. He exercised it, he says, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in strifes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings. He describes himself as always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, as having fellowship with Christ's sufferings, as filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ; and this intimate association with Jesus Christ in His Passion is the note and the temper of all true missionaries. And in not a few cases, as we know, the correspondence is carried out to the very last extremity. The spirit of self-sacrifice is shown perhaps most completely in a willingness after years of toil to dispense, if it be God's will, with proofs of success. Our practical English temper prompts us to insist upon tangible results as a test of the value of spiritual work; but, although such results are a blessing and an encouragement for which, when it is given, a man may well thank God, yet their absence is by no means a proof that no real work has been done. The seed which is sown in one generation may take time to mature, and will only bear fruit in the next. Long before the Roman empire became Christian the air, so to speak, was filled with Christian ideas; the Christian Creed was discussed and rediscussed by those who did not yet hold it, and, while stray conversions took place in all ranks of life, the mass of the people remained apparently attached to the old Paganism. In the middle of the third century not more than one-twentieth part of the population was Christian; in the next century, the fourth, conversions came with a rush. The ground had now been prepared, the seed at last had taken root and sprung up. This may suggest encouragement to those of us who are disposed to complain, for example, of the slow progress which Christianity makes in India. The difficulties which India presents to the Christian Church are in some respects greater than any that were presented by the Paganism of old Rome, and the Church has not yet had in that country half the time which she took in order to conquer the mind and heart of the Roman empire for Christ. She was at least two hundred and fifty years about that work, and we have not reached the date in our Indian missions which would correspond to the middle of the third century of the work of the Church within the

empire, and yet nearly twenty years ago Sir Bartle Frere could write that "statistical facts in no way convey any adequate idea of the work done in any part of India." "The effect," he says, "is often enormous where there has not been a single avowed conversion." And, again: "The teaching of Christianity among a hundred and sixty millions of civilized industrious Hindoos and Mohammedans in India is effecting changes, moral, social, and political, which for extent and rapidity of effect are far more extraordinary than we or our fathers have witnessed in modern Europe." These changes—do not let us be mistaken—are not conversions, but they are the preparation of the mental and moral soil in which conversions take place; they show that we may hope for a progress not less certain, if not less rapid, than that of the Gospel of Christ among those countries of the West which were the scenes of its first great victories.

These and some kindred considerations were urged some years since, with his wonted power, in a paper comparing ancient and modern missions, by a great prelate who has just passed from this earthly scene into the eternal world. At a quarter to four o'clock yesterday afternoon, just as we were gathering here for the evening service, in which his name was mentioned among the sick who desired the prayers of the Church, the Bishop of Durham died at Bournemouth. On the morrow of such an event it is difficult, it is impossible, to estimate its real significance. A bishop's death must always be of solemn moment for the diocese over which he has presided, and, in a less emphatic sense, for the Church at large. But this general truth would give no adequate idea of the nature of the loss which has just been sustained. The withdrawal of such a mind and heart as Bishop Lightfoot's in days such as our own is more than a loss to the English Church,—it is a loss to Christendom. If I put aside the regions of later ecclesiastical history, which another bishop, also formerly a member of this chapter, has made especially his own, Bishop Lightfoot was beyond dispute the most learned of living English prelates. He was one—am I wrong in saying he was the leader?—of a band of Cambridge scholars who have rolled back an assault upon the New Testament more formidable in many respects than any to which the title deeds of our holy religion have ever been exposed since the first age of Christianity.

Years have now passed since he reached an eminence from which an expression of his opinion commanded the attention of learned Europe. His edition of the works of the martyr-bishop of Antioch, St. Ignatius, is probably the greatest monument of his own knowledge and labour,—it is certainly the most splendid result of modern English scholarship; and it has extinguished controversies which a few years since were still active by a weight of learning handled with an insight and an ability from which in these matters there is no appeal. But the great majority of his readers will bless him for many years to come for his apologetic and expository writings on the New Testament. As an interpreter of Holy Scripture he is almost always conspicuous for a strong, luminous, and reverent judgment,—a judgment which is not crushed by his massive learning, nor wearied by the incessant conflict of opinion past and present which he cannot but hear around him, nor tempted from its path by some attractive paradox; a judgment which states its conclusions in language so simple, so clear, so absolutely devoid of pedantry, that probably only a few of his readers suspect what those conclusions really represent in the way of knowledge and thought. Nor was the late Bishop merely a scholar who lost sight of practical and spiritual interests in his absorbing intimacy with books; he was a good, because he was a hard-working and disinterested, administrator. He brought to the government of his diocese the very qualities which made his books what they are, and as he leaves them his clergy have come largely to reflect their Bishop's unwearied industry, his love of learning, his high integrity, his hopeful and patient zeal,—above all, his devotion to the cause of our Lord and Saviour. It could hardly be otherwise, as they must know who have had the happiness to come into contact with that in him which was greater, greater far, than either his learning or his ability,—I mean his character. Amidst tokens of a popularity in his university which was said to be unrivalled, amidst public distinctions which as the years passed crowded in upon him with increasing importunity, he never seemed to lose a ray of the sweetness of temper, of the simplicity, of the unmistakable disinterestedness, of the patient tolerance—as I have reason to know—of differences, of the deep and unaffected humility, which were his distinguishing graces. Doubtless his episcopal

brethren, his mourning diocese, his old university, and especially his surviving colleague in its Faculty of Theology, have a share in him larger than any to which we can here lay claim; but assuredly all who had the great happiness of being associated with him during his eight years' tenure of a canonry in this cathedral church must feel his death to be nothing short of a personal sorrow. It may safely be predicted that we, and those who may take our places, will cherish his memory as we cherish that of another member of our body who bore his Christian name, and was perhaps the greatest of his predecessors in the See of Durham, Joseph Butler. We shall think of Bishop Joseph Lightfoot also as one of God's best gifts to us in the course of our long history, as one of the brightest glories of St. Paul's.

The paper to which I have referred was read by the late Bishop at a meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Society which I ask you to-day to strengthen by your interest, by your prayers, by your contributions. For well nigh a century this Society alone did what it could to enable the Church of England to obey our Lord's parting command, and at this time it follows the flag and the enterprise of England among all the nations of the world, and, according to its ability, it sows beside all waters the seeds of eternal life. Many of you may feel,—I myself have felt,—particular interest in local missions, in which a high standard of self-sacrifice and concentrated sympathies, and many and incessant prayers on the spot and at home, result in greater achievements than are possible everywhere over the wide field occupied by a great society, but it would be ungenerous, as well as mistaken, to allow these particular interests to deprive the oldest missionary agency among us of the means which are needed to enable it to cope with its immense opportunities, its immense responsibilities. Upper Burma alone, so lately added to the British empire, requires great and immediate efforts to enable us to do our duty to its teeming population. New Guinea and Corea have every claim upon us that every spiritual want, on the one hand, or devoted service on the other, could possibly establish, while both in South and Central Africa the last year or two have imposed on the society tasks of the utmost magnitude, but which it cannot hope to discharge without generous support from the

Church at home. Let us bear in mind that we all of us owe allegiance to the Lord's parting command that, if we cannot discharge the duty He lays on us in person, we must do so by deputy; that we all can do something to prepare before Him the way of His last coming; that we should qualify ourselves to be able to assure Him on His birthday—Christmas morning—that we have not utterly forgotten what we owe to the high and gracious purpose which drew Him down from His throne in heaven for the salvation of the world.

A WEALTHY LANDLORD.*

“Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?”—LUKE xii. 20.

ON the last Sunday in the year many of us are probably embarrassed by the presence of two different classes of subjects which claim our attention. On the one side is the great festival of our Lord's Nativity, still, as the collects and the proper prefaces in the Communion Service show, in the full course of its octave, and to many good Christians it seems at such a time almost an act of faithlessness to dwell on any truth, however important, which lies further from the heart of the Gospels than does the birth of the Redeemer into our human world. On the other hand, the last Sunday, almost as much as the last day in the civil year, brings with it serious thoughts to many a man who has not yet learned to attach their due value to those great truths and lessons which the Christian Church teaches us through the succession of her festivals. And, indeed, none of us can well fail to feel as often as we pass one more of these natural landmarks, as they may be called, of time that the question, “What are we doing with our lives?” is an inevitable question. As we get up in the morning and we say to ourselves, “This is the last Sunday in the year,” we can hardly help asking ourselves what use we have made of the fifty-one Sundays that have preceded it, to say nothing of the intervening days. We can hardly help whispering, each one to himself, “I wonder whether I shall be here to see the last Sunday of another

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year." These questions and reflections do not conflict with the great subject of the incarnation of God the Son, for the sake of raising fallen man, which Christmas brings home to us,—nay, if they are steadily dwelt upon, they enhance our sense of the overwhelming importance to each and all of us of that great and gracious mystery; but undoubtedly they form a subject of themselves, and when life is so short for those who live longest, and its issues are so momentous, we cannot do amiss in turning our thoughts towards them at those moments of our existence which must naturally suggest them.

The words with which our Lord concludes the parable of the wealthy landlord, who died suddenly, will assist us in doing this: "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" In order to understand something of the searching and pathetic character of this inquiry, it is necessary to recall the incident out of which the parable that leads up to it arose. Our Lord had been asked a question, it would seem, not by one of His disciples, but by a man of the crowd who had possibly been listening to Him for the first time in his life, and was deeply impressed by coming into contact with what seemed to him a higher wisdom and a nobler character than any he had encountered before. When we have suddenly conceived a warm admiration for, or confidence in, a teacher, it is natural to consult him on the subject which lies nearest to our hearts, and this man was a younger son who conceived that he had been unjustly deprived by an elder brother of his proper share in their father's estate. Believing that, if his brother could only be brought under the influence of One Who spoke with such mingled tenderness and authority as did our Lord, he must needs obey, the young man asked our Lord to interfere: "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." Our Lord refused, and on grounds which are at all times, and now, perhaps, especially, entitled to attention. Spiritual truth belongs to one sphere, civil law to another, and the question of the legal destination or division of an estate was a question of civil law. No doubt it was also a question of natural justice, but it belonged to that sort or department of justice which is inseparable from technical methods and from special knowledge. As far as our Lord had revealed Himself to the questioner, He was, and He was only, a Teacher of spiritual truth, and as such He could

not encroach on a jurisdiction which belonged, by Divine appointment, to the State, just as He would not have recognised the State's right to rule questions of spiritual truth. "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" They are momentous words. When we look at them in the light of later history they suggest to us that the Christian Church may have at times, and here or there, attempted to deal with problems beyond her province, and that, as punishment for such attempts, she may have been debarred by the State, jealous of its independence, from deciding those graver issues which, by the will of her Founder, she only can legitimately decide. At this moment the words offer, perhaps, another suggestion. The air around us is filled with controversies on the respective rights of labour and capital, and the Christian Church is constantly adjured to be true to her Master and to bid capital, whether in this sense or in that, to divide its inheritance with labour. Most assuredly, in such a controversy the Church cannot stand aside in an attitude of indifference—she has duties to the older and to the younger brother. It is her work and her privilege to relieve suffering so far as she can, wherever it is found, and however it may have been caused. She must remind capital of the duties of an unselfish care for the bodies and souls of men, and she must remind labour, organised labour, that its best claims upon the attention of capitalised wealth may be fatally weakened or destroyed by the indulgence of class-hatreds, or by the promotion of vulgar personal ambitions. But beyond this the clergy, at any rate, can hardly hope to interfere with advantage, and, if they stand aloof, it is not necessarily from want of courage, but because, as a class, they must be conscious of not possessing that special knowledge which is needed for useful interference,—for such interference as will procure, not a passing sense of satisfaction and a shout of applause that soon dies away, but the permanent and satisfactory settlement of questions that are, in truth, vast and intricate. In presence of these questions, they may say assuredly with more reason than their all-wise Master, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?"

But our Lord's deepest reason for this decision of His not to interfere between the younger and the elder brother is given in the precept and in the parable which He uttered immediately

afterwards. The drift of both of them is the same—the relative valuelessness of earthly possessions when placed in the light of the true conditions of the life of man. Turning from the young man who had addressed the request to Him to the crowd of listeners and disciples who stood around, He said to them, “Take heed and beware of all covetousness, for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” This was a warning to the elder brother who wished to retain the whole estate; it was a warning to the younger brother who was bent on getting a share of the estate; it was a warning to the listeners, who probably were thinking that they at any rate had not asked a stranger to interfere in a family quarrel with a view to their personal aggrandisement, while they forgot that the passion for property which was at the root of the quarrel was not less powerful in their own hearts and characters than it was elsewhere. Who that knows anything really of himself will dare to say that such a precept is unneeded? And the precept was followed by the parable of the rich man with a productive farm. Like the parable of Dives and Lazarus, it is one of those which look as though our Lord in uttering them was thinking of, although perhaps modifying, a case in real life which had passed under His eyes. A prosperous landowner is embarrassed by his very property. He does not know where to stow away his abundant crops. He first decides to pull down his barns and build greater. In this way he will secure the produce of his estate. He asks himself what is the outcome of this outlay of money and toil to be. He decides that he had better insure and enlarge his opportunities for enjoyment. “Soul,” he exclaims in a sort of ecstatic transport, “soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” But man proposes, while God disposes. The landowner was thinking of many years of pleasure, when it had already been decided in heaven that his days should end at once. “God said unto him, thou foolish one, this night thy soul shall be required of thee;” and then there follows the question, “Whose shall those things be that thou hast provided?”

The object, as you will observe, of the parable is to illustrate our Lord’s saying that man’s true life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. With a view to

this it brings vividly before us four considerations ; and the first is the embarrassment which wealth, and especially a sudden accession of wealth, may bring to a man who is not under the guidance of high and true principles. People who have no property, or very little of it, are apt to think that if only a fortune was left them they should know very well what to do with it. Whether they would or not depends upon the question whether their lives are governed or not by a distinct principle,—the principle may be a good or a bad one. No doubt a man whose principles are bad knows very well what he would do with a large sum of money. He would probably spend it in gambling or in profligacy. But the landowner in the parable is not a bad man in this sense,—he is only a man without a good principle to guide him, and thus his sudden prosperity simply perplexes him. He may have wished for wealth in former days, but now it has come on him, and he knows not what to do with it : “ He thought within himself, saying, What shall I do ? ” Had he been a servant of God, he would have remembered that this unlooked-for addition to the yearly produce of his estate came from the Author of all goodness, and he would have been sure that a part, if not the whole, of it ought to be returned to Him in the shape of aid to some work of religion, or of mercy, that would best advance His glory. He would have sought guidance in prayer as to the mode in which this acknowledgment of God’s bounty might most usefully be made. As it is, he does not see his way. He takes no counsel with God, no counsel with the wise or thoughtful among his fellow-men. He is alone with his own thoughts. He revolves in his brain scheme after scheme ; he is the sport of his own bewildering fancy, he cannot make up his mind, he has more on his hands than he knows how to dispose of,—“ What shall I do ? I have no room where to bestow my fruits.” This landowner certainly belongs to our modern and Western world quite as much as to the ancient East. There are people among us to-day who do not know what to do with their wealth. They are surrounded by persons and objects on which it might be bestowed with the greatest advantage both to the receiver and the giver. Poverty, sickness, education in principles which will make life useful and death happy, missions to the heathen, the promotion of religious enterprise in any one of its many forms,—

these and other claimants stand around the man of property, stretching out their hands for a share of his wealth, but he either does not see, or does not heed, or does not understand them. He is still embarrassed by the very abundance to which he clings, he can only say within himself, "What shall I do?"

And a second consideration follows. Here, in this wealthy landowner, is an example of the love of property as such, and apart from anything that can be done with it. The landowner's perplexities you see have come to an end. A sudden resolve has flashed upon his mind—"This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods." He has caught hold of an idea. The use of property is that he should improve, that he should augment it. "Property"—that is his reflection—"property is an end in itself, and the more you can make it grow, the more you can add to it, so much the better." The man looks upon his property as, in some sense, a part of himself. His happiness for the time being consists in possessing it, whatever use he may or may not be able to make of it. Observe how he repeats the possessive pronoun—"my" fruits, "my" barns, "my" goods. That is the charm. It is not only property, it is *his* property. We see this trait of human nature develop itself very early in very little children. The very young child will often delight mainly in a toy, not simply as curious or beautiful, but as *his* toy, and not the toy of some other child. The human soul, even as it opens upon life, betrays this singular and deep-seated passion for assimilating to itself something outward and material, for finding its happiness, its joy, its glory, in making the most of bits of matter, whether it be a diamond that is worth millions, or a stick that is picked out of the hedge. "I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow my fruits and my goods." Certainly this temper was not peculiar to a Syrian landlord or farmer. The Roman poet saw the same thing going on at the same time in the capital of the world. He has vividly described the man who applauded himself each time that he looked stealthily at the money in his strong box, and I suppose we all of us have known cases in which fortunes have been accumulated by the simple process of investing year by year in new securities the entire surplus of

income that was not wanted for personal expenses or for the cost of a household. In this manner, no doubt, fortunes may grow quickly, and as they grow may become the object of a man's passionate solicitude. Once more, the service of God and the service of men urge their claims. The poor, the sick, the heathen, the neglected, the uneducated young, the hospital, the Church, all urge their claims, but all to no purpose. For the time being the man of property has only one object,—the accumulation of property as an end in itself. To this all else must give way.

And here a third consideration presents itself, for there is that in the human soul, even when most forgetful of its true destiny as a spirit created to know, to love, to enjoy its God to all eternity,—there is that in the human soul which refuses for ever to take pleasure in the mere handling of money or any sort of matter as a thing to be rejoiced in for its own sake. If the soul does not yet know the true object of its existence, it at least looks out for something beyond material possessions, something which those possessions shall bring. "Property," it says to itself, "property must not exist simply to be possessed. It must do something, it must minister to its possessor something that is beyond itself; and if it is not made to subserve the cause of goodness, or the cause of knowledge, or of truth, then it must furnish amusement and pleasure." And so the landowner said unto his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Here, again, this idea of the object and use of property does not belong only to the ancient world. No doubt that old world knew well how to spend fortunes upon mere amusement, after one fashion in the East and another in the West. Under the Empire, not only did the wealthy classes spend enormous sums upon their baths, their villas, their gardens, their troops of slaves, their importations of all that the art and luxury of the East could furnish them, but the mass of the people too demanded amusement from their rulers if they were to be kept in good temper. "Bread and the public games," that was the cry, and woe to the Roman emperor who persistently neglected it. But the idea that the real use of money is to minister to pleasure and amusement is surely common enough among Christians to-day, and they are often so far worse than the old Pagan rulers

of Rome that, instead of furnishing pleasures to those who cannot pay for anything to brighten their lives, they often reflect with satisfaction that their enjoyments are a sort of distinction since they are not shared by anybody else. Doubtless a certain expenditure is inevitable in certain stations of life, but this surely does not warrant the race in ostentation and luxury which characterises some sections of modern society, or the outlay of vast sums of money in some self-gratification, or in the effort to achieve some social success. There are indeed wealthy people among us whose expenditure is as much a matter of conscience as if they had the greatest possible difficulty in making both ends meet. But what sums are expended upon equipages, dresses, household decorations and furniture, theatres,—sums that would go far, if they were properly applied, to renew the face of the earth, economically, socially and religiously. Certainly our modern expenditure upon mere pleasure is enormous. Then, after all, what is pleasure? One of the ablest writers who ever lived describes it as a correspondence between a faculty and its object; but what if the faculty is surfeited or enfeebled, or in a way to wear out? Expenditure can command the object of enjoyment, it cannot insure that the power to enjoy shall last; it cannot make the senses for ever vigorous, fresh, and quick, it cannot make the most prized, the most costly entertainment for ever welcome. A time comes when, as the old preacher says, desire, or the artificial stimulant which quickens desire, shall fail, and then pleasure dies away with the gradually decaying senses into the dim background of a waning memory.

Nor can we be sure that time will be allowed for this gradual process of dissolution. The prospect of indefinite enjoyment may be abruptly cut short, and thus we arrive at the fourth consideration. The whole scheme of indefinite enjoyment may suddenly collapse. No man has a right to presume upon the future. God said, "Thou foolish one, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." At this point probably some one is already saying to himself, "Here we are to have the old common-place about the uncertainty of life." Undoubtedly, and a very important common-place it is. Do not, my friends, do not fall into the vulgar mistake of turning a truth of vital importance out of your minds for no better reason than that it is a common-place.

Why is it a common-place? Why is any great certain solemn fact a common-place but because, while it cannot be disputed, it is too solemn, too urgent to be neglected, and therefore it has been in all ages at once accepted and discussed? Poor and false, indeed, would be our thoughts about truth and life if we were to dismiss from them all truths that have attracted the common thought, the common speech of mankind. We should too surely thus leave out of account that which it most concerns us to take to our very hearts. Doubtless the uncertainty of life is a common-place, but it is one which we can least afford to set aside, while we are all of us too ready to do so. Look around you, each within the circuit of his own experience, and see if you do not recognise the picture in the parable: the indolent epicureanism which whispers to itself once and again, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," broken in upon by some message flashed from heaven. It comes in a railway accident, it comes in a sinking packet boat, it comes, as the other day, by a death in the hunting-field, it comes by the sudden stoppage of the heart's action. "Thou fool, this hour thy soul shall be required of thee." No, whatever other truths may be assailed in an age of scepticism, no sceptic has yet questioned the uncertainty of human life. Whatever other dangers may be warded off or turned aside by science, no discoverer has yet told us how we may certainly keep out of the grave, or provide against the hundred contingencies that may hurry us into it. At any moment the catastrophe may come which parts the landowner from his barns, his fruit, his goods, his enjoyments, just as completely as if he had never been in contact with them for a single moment. And thus there remains the question as it was put by our Lord, "The things which thou hast provided, whose shall they be?" Even the light-hearted Horace is grave at the tomb. "All," he says, "is left behind, save the cypress that stands beside it." As the Psalmist says of a wealthy man of his day, "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him." "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Whose indeed! How suddenly are all the provisions of the most carefully drawn will defeated by one or two deaths! A fortune accumulated by the toil of years is left to children to be a legacy of unhappiness, to suggest fictitious

wants that have nothing to do with real comfort, to be consumed in law expenses, undertaken to decide whose after all the larger part shall be, to be spent in debauchery, to be alienated for the payment of heavy debts, if indeed it does not quickly devolve on some distant heir-at-law who has no more feeling of gratitude for the maker of his fortune than he entertains towards the cattle whose flesh he eats, or the field that supplies him with bread, if indeed,—and it is not an imaginary case,—if indeed he does not reflect that the author of his fortunes is now well out of the way, and proceeds accordingly to traverse his cherished wishes or even to insult his memory.

My friends, the vital question for all of us is, What is my idea of property? Is property something which I must inevitably leave behind me when I die, or is it something which may be interwoven with the very texture of my immortal nature, and so will last me for eternity? Money, jewels, lands, houses, books, decorations of all sorts and kinds, must be taken leave of on the bed of death. Even the trifling object which affection has cherished for a life-time,—a little book, a likeness,—all must be left behind. But there are things which last—habits wrought into the intellect and the will, the love of God and of man, sincerity, purity, and disinterestedness. These things live, these things are really property: death cannot touch them; they are treasures in that heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

Let us consider, in conclusion, just two practical bearings of this truth. What would probably be the reply of four out of five men whom you meet in the street if they were suddenly asked what they meant by a true civilisation? Would they not say that civilisation is such a manipulation of the materials and forces of the natural world around us as enables us human beings to make the most of it; that nations are civilised or uncivilised in the degree in which they do or do not possess this mastery over nature, this knowledge which enables them to assert and to maintain it, and the social and political order which is essential to its safety? The railroad, the gasometer, the electric light, the electric telegraph, the telephone, well guarded by police, by fleets, and armies,—these are the most splendid, as they are the most recent, triumphs of our civilisation. They add a new lustre to the idea of civilisation which

we learn from the great constructions, from the great writers, and from the artistic triumphs of antiquity. What is this but the principle of the landowner in the parable, "I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods"? Surely such an idea of civilisation—that is to say, of true human improvement—is a libel upon human nature. True human improvement must be an improvement of man himself, and not of anything that is outside man. And what is man himself? Not surely anything that he owns, not anything material that he can so handle as to make it serve his purpose, not even the bodily frame from which he will part company at death, though only to resume it at a later stage of his existence. Essentially, man is a spirit clothed in a bodily form, and the spiritual essence links him to the orders of the heavenly intelligences above him, just as his body connects him with the animal world beneath him. His real improvement consists in that which secures the freedom and the supremacy of the noblest part of his nature, the exercise of his understanding on the highest truth, the devotion of his affections to the highest duty, the obedience of his will to the perfect law. A true civilisation is that which shall promote these results upon a great scale in human society; and a material civilisation, however highly developed, which does not promote them is not a true or an adequate civilisation. We know from history and from experience that man in his very triumphs over matter may degrade himself, that material improvement, whether in a man or in a people, may go hand in hand with moral degradation. Matter may establish an empire over the spirit of the being whose own hand has but now subdued it. This is not to say that true civilisation has nothing to do with the external conditions of man's life. It is indisputable with a due attention to these conditions a certain measure of material civilisation is of great and real importance, just as in the life of the individual man a certain measure of bodily health and strength is needed for the due exercise of the mental and moral faculties, while corpulence threatens them in more ways than one. So it is with societies of men. True human civilisation is a moral, even more than a mental,—aye, it is a spiritual civilisation, and it is attained when man's material progress has reached the exact point at which it affords the greatest assistance, and offers the fewest

obstacles, to that mental and moral growth in which the excellence of man himself, as distinct from that of anything outside man, pre-eminently consists.

Or consider how much healthier would be the condition of our society than it actually is if our Lord's teaching in the parable could be frankly accepted. How different would be the temper of that large majority of men who, arrange and re-arrange property as we will, will never possess with others an equal share of material goods, if only for the reason that they, or their parents, are born into this world with unequal faculties for production; but also, how different, how unspeakably happier would be the lives of those who do possess, or who hope to possess, even large wealth if these conditions were complied with. To take only one illustration out of many, what do we see every year, as the London season draws near, but a bevy of mothers, like generals setting out on a campaign, prepared to undergo any amount of fatigue if only they may marry their daughters, not necessarily to a high-souled virtuous man, but in any case to a fortune? What do we see but a group of young men thinking, after perhaps a career of dissipation, that the time has arrived for settling respectably in life, and looking out, each one of them, not for a girl who has the graces and the character which will make her husband and her children happy, but for somebody who has a sufficient dowry to enable him to keep up a large establishment. Who can wonder, when the most sacred of all human relations, the union of two hearts for time and for eternity, is thus prostituted to the brutal level of an affair of cash, that such transactions are quickly followed by months or years of misery,—misery which, after seething long in private, is at last paraded before the eyes of the wondering world amid the unspeakable shame and degradation of the Divorce Court? Ah! we think perhaps that the dangers to existing social order are to be found only elsewhere in the changing physical conditions of man's existence, in new relations between labour and capital, in organised strikes, in disorderly mobs which threaten, more or less remotely, some serious revolution. I do not make light of all this, but let us depend on it our worst dangers are nearer home. This surely is a practical question for reflection which we may all of us take to heart on the last Sunday in the year, "What am I doing with the life which

God has given me? What am I doing with those surroundings of it which I call mine, but which I only have in trust for a very few years, and which I cannot possibly take away with me? What am I doing with that spiritual essence which is my very self, and which will live, whether I will it or not, in woe or in bliss throughout eternity?" As we ask ourselves these questions there passes before us on a day like this the procession of the dead who were among us this day a year ago, who have gone before us into the world of the unseen. There they pass,—the great popular statesman, the old relative of the sovereign, the venerable peer, so long and so intimately associated with this city, the saintly martyr of charity who has thrilled us all with a higher sense of duty, the great poet who is to be laid in the Abbey on Tuesday, the greater bishop and scholar who lingered among us till a week ago, and was buried in the midst of his flock that he ruled and loved so well the day before yesterday. There they pass, and with them many, many another less known to fame, but whom we have known and loved. Where are they now?

"O! hidden blest repose,
 So thin the veil by your retirement worn,
 We, too, may be with you ere evening's close.
 Whether they sleep beyond the western bourne,
 Or on the precincts of our being lie,
 They are the outgoings of the eternal morn,
 Which shall be borne on wings of Deity,
 Like clouds that burn with gold, kindling the eastern sky."

There they pass, and what do they, what would they say to us? Do not they seem to say, "Do not make a mistake as to that in which your true life consists; do not prefer the material to the spiritual; do not postpone the eternal to the things of time. It was to teach you the awfulness, the greatness, of your life that the Highest at this time laid aside His glory, and was born of a virgin-mother into your little world of shadows and of sin. Lay hold, while you may, of His strength and His pardon, that you may possess that of which nothing can deprive you,—His own lasting presence, His very Self"?

RESURRECTION AND DIVINITY.*

“Who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”—ROM. i. 3, 4.

A GREAT festival of the Christian Church like Easter appears to have one drawback attending it from which days of less importance are comparatively free. It offers us so much to think about that, unless we try to make some one of the lessons which it teaches our own, it may pass by without leaving us the wiser or the better for taking part in it. The rays of truth which flash forth from a fact like the resurrection of our Lord are so many and so bright that if we do not fix our minds upon some one of them, and do what we can to understand its importance, we may only be dazzled into bewilderment by the splendid whole, and may carry away with us nothing that will afterwards shape our thoughts or influence our lives. And here St. Paul comes to our assistance by suggesting at the beginning of his greatest epistle a point which may well engage our attention, namely, the bearing of the resurrection on the divinity of our Lord. Among other things, the resurrection, he tells us, did this: it threw a special light on the higher nature of Jesus Christ, who was declared to be “the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.”

Now let us note for a moment that in the passage before St. Paul summarily describes the contents of the Gospel, and says that it was wholly concerned with our Lord Jesus Christ and with two facts about Him more especially. The first fact that *He was really man with a human body and a human soul*; this was due to His being a member of a particular and well-known Jewish family. “According to the flesh,” that is in respect to His human nature, He was “born of the seed of David.” The second fact was that although man He was more than man, “according to the spirit of holiness,” that is, in respect of His higher and superhuman nature, *He was declared to be the Son of God*. The phrase, “According to the spirit of holiness,” in the second clause, corresponds to and

* Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, Sunday afternoon, April 6th.

contrasts with the phrase "according to the flesh" in the first clause; and as the flesh in this passage certainly means human nature and not, as often, the corrupt or animalized principle in human nature, so "the spirit of holiness" means not the third person in the Godhead Who sanctifies us, but the higher or Divine nature of Christ somewhat vaguely described and set over against His human nature. For this less common use of the word "spirit" we have a warrant in two other passages of the New Testament at least, and the resulting sense is that as our Lord was seen to be truly human by the fact of His birth in the family of David, so the true import and character of His higher nature became apparent when He rose from the dead.

Here, then, is open to us a subject of the highest interest on this greatest of Christian festivals, when the Church throughout the world stands around the empty sepulchre, proclaiming that Christ is risen from the dead. For here we are taught by the Apostle to think of that resurrection not only as a reversal of the humiliation and defeat which had preceded it, not only as the certificate of the mission of the greatest Teacher of religion to mankind, but as something more, as a declaration, or more precisely, a definition of what in respect of His superhuman nature our Lord really was and is. The resurrection was not only a wonder, it was an instruction, it was the means of making it plain to all who had spiritual eyes to see that He Who rose was much more than the first of prophets and apostles, that He was no less than the only begotten Son of God Who had shared God's throne and His nature from all eternity.

That which the Apostle's words may first of all suggest to us is *the importance of events*. He attributes, you observe, to a single event the power of setting forth a great truth, just as though the event were a speaker or a book. Christ, he says, was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. Undoubtedly, brethren, events are for God what language is for man. They are the manner, the means whereby God reveals His mind and will. Events are the language of God written on the pages of human history, whether it be the history of a man or of a family, or of a nation or of the world. Just as God's eternal power and Godhead are, according to the Apostle, clearly understood by

reverent study of the book of Nature, the "things that are made," as he calls it, so the judgments which are formed in the Divine mind on men, on families, on nations, are discoverable in the book of human history, as they are written in the language of events. This, of course, must appear an unreasonable statement to those who imagine that all that happens to mankind—birth and death, sickness and health, good and bad seasons, national prosperity and national decline—are the results of blind forces which exist, *why* we know not, *wherefore* we know not, but which have, it seems, somehow given us existence only that, like the seaweed that is tossed this way or that on the surf of the wave, we may illustrate their relentless power and our own abject helplessness. But it will not appear unreasonable to any man who sincerely believes in a living God, in a God Whose rules of working are not His masters, nor yet powers which, after owing to Him their being, have somehow escaped from His control, but only the free manifestations by Himself of that order which is the rule of His life. He Himself is everywhere present, everywhere and incessantly intelligent and at work, so that by Him the hairs of our head are all numbered, and without Him not a sparrow falls to the ground. To believe in a living God is to believe that events which He brings about or permits are a declaration of His mind. But then whether the characters in which His mind is thus declared are always legible by man or by all men is quite another question. Sometimes, indeed, they are written in a familiar alphabet; their meaning is so clear that all men may read it. All who believed that the world is governed by a moral god understood what was meant by the fall of Babylon, by the capture of Rome by Alaric, by the close of the career of Napoleon. Sometimes they are written in characters as wholly unintelligible to all living men as were the Egyptian hieroglyphics half a century ago, though they may be read by the higher intelligences around the throne in heaven, or they may be read hereafter on earth, for all that we know, by highly endowed souls. And in the book of history there is much written of this kind which eludes the efforts of man's inquisitive and constant gaze. But sometimes also the meaning of God's writing in events is hidden from the mass of men at first sight, but becomes plain to them when the key of its

interpretation has been given them by some competent instructor like the "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," traced on the wall of the banqueting chamber of the Eastern monarch, the sense of which was plain when a Daniel had been summoned to decipher it. Of such handwriting as this, too, history is full, but we must not linger on it, since we have to fix our attention on one great example of it in one particular event, the resurrection of our Lord.

Now that a striking occurrence such as the resurrection would have a special meaning or several meanings is an obvious supposition. The strange thing would be if such an event could occur without any purpose or meaning at all; and St. Paul tells us what, in his inspired judgment, one such meaning was,—it was to declare that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Endeavour, my brethren, to think what sort of impression would be created in your minds, if, after following to the grave one whom you had dearly loved for many years, after listening to the last office of the Church and watching the sod as it was thrown in upon the coffin, you should see that same friend or relative enter your room with the old look, the well-known figure and expression, the accustomed voice, remaining just long enough to assure you that he was here again, and then passing swiftly away to comfort and encourage some other mourner. And yet this is, in substance, what did happen to Mary Magdalene, to the holy women, to Peter, to Thomas, to the two disciples, to the ten on the day of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Such an event could not but have a great significance. Even if the risen one should not utter a word, the mere appearance of such a visitor would be pregnant with meaning. It would declare a great deal that at first we should find it hard to put into words about the unseen world and this, about life and death, about the ways of God, and about the destiny of man.

You will allow this and much more. But why, you may ask, should our Lord's resurrection have the higher and particular effect of declaring Him to be the Son of God. Others, you may well urge, had visited the realms of death, and had returned to life, who were not declared by this awful experience to be Divine. We need not travel beyond the records of the gospel history in order to meet with the widow's son at Nain, and with Lazarus at Bethany. Certainly in these

cases resurrection to life was a signal token of the Divine favour; it left them as it found them, members of the human family still subject to the law of death. What was it in our Lord's case which invested His resurrection with this declaratory force which the Apostle ascribes to it? The answer is, first of all, that the resurrection of our Lord was a verification of the proof which He had voluntarily offered of His own claim. The Jewish doctors had understood the words of the Psalm as addressed to Messiah, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee," not only of His birth before time as it is understood in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but also of His rising from the dead; and in this sense it is employed by St. Paul in that wonderful appeal to the Jewish conscience which he made in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, Scripture thus bearing its own witness to the depth below depth of meaning which lies in its very simplest words. Therefore our Lord, knowing what was involved in the claim to be Messiah, foretold His resurrection certainly on six, probably on more, occasions; and it was in this fulfilment of His own prediction—a prediction based on the deeper sense of the ancient Scriptures—that St. Paul recognises a declaration of the Divine Sonship of Christ. The resurrection was an intervention of the Almighty Father on behalf of His well-beloved Son; it was an assertion by a Son of His real relationship to the Father; it was a proof that the uncertainties of the future and the laws of the physical world were alike subject to His supreme control; it was an event in the manner of its accomplishment so altogether exceptional and striking that the Apostle's appeal to it as declaratory of our Lord's divinity is, if the expression might be allowed, only natural. Our Lord Himself had summoned the widow's son to rise from the bier, He had summoned Lazarus to issue from the recesses of the tomb, but no form of majesty or power stood by His grave, no voice of authority was heard to speak when before the dawn His human soul, returning from the regions of the dead, re-united itself with the holy body that lay in the sepulchre to pass forth into the world of living men. It was a declaration that He Who had died and was buried was the Son of God.

But further, in our Lord's case the resurrection did not stand alone. It is abstractedly conceivable that the foolish or bad

might be raised from the dead with superhuman power ; one day, we Christians know, they will be, in order to give account of the things done in the body. In our Lord's case resurrection from the dead was combined with absolute holiness and wisdom, with words such as never man spake, with a life that none who had witnessed it could convict of sin, in short, with a manifestation of truth and goodness which had never before been offered to the human conscience. The resurrection was the fitting complement to the life and teaching of our Lord ; it confirmed the anticipations which that life and teaching naturally raised ; it was the countersign in the sphere of physical being of a judgment which had already been formed in the sphere of instructed conscience. Had our Lord lived and taught and then rotted in His grave even His life would have died away in time from the memories of men. Had He risen—it is an impossible supposition—without having lived His life, His resurrection would have been merely a blank wonder, appealing only to imagination, and saying nothing to the sense of right and truth. As it is, it proclaimed to all the world what disciples like Peter at Cæsarea Philippi had owned before at their Master's feet,—it proclaimed that He Who was crucified, dead, and buried, is the Son of God, declared to be such by His resurrection from the dead.

But the Apostle says that the declaration of the Divine Sonship of Christ which was made by the resurrection was made "with power." The resurrection did not hesitatingly suggest that our Lord might possibly be the Son of God ; it amounted, when taken together with His life and character and teaching, to a demonstration irresistible and overwhelming, at least to the Apostle himself, that He was the Son of God. I say to the Apostle himself, because, looking at the connection of the passage, it is scarcely open to doubt that the expression "with power" points first of all to a personal experience. Saul of Tarsus, at that time an active young rabbi in Jerusalem strongly attached to the cause of the Pharisee party, was not one of the privileged company to whom our risen Redeemer showed Himself during the great forty days. As an unconverted Jew he would have looked at the person and work of Jesus through an atmosphere discoloured by false reports and by implacable controversial passions. For Saul, the rabbi Jesus was only a teacher Who had established for Himself in

the mind of the educated many the character and authority of a prophet whose influence was steadily directed against that of the representatives of the established order of things in Jerusalem, and Who had only met with His deserts when He was put to a cruel death by the Roman authority. The tragedy of Calvary, no doubt, he would have said at the time, would be a nine days' wonder, and other persons and events of interest would come to the front, and all would be forgotten. Nor would this have been disturbed by the rumours which may have reached Saul's ears that there had been one or more apparitions of Jesus after His death. Saul's robust scepticism would have whispered to itself that rumours of this kind were only to be expected among the credulous and disappointed followers whom Jesus had misled, and that they were not deserving of serious consideration; and so he would have gone his way, in his bitter sincerity even going so far as to place himself at the disposal of the persecuting party, not his own, which filled the highest places of the Jewish priesthood, and to take a foremost part in the cruelties by which it was hoped to stamp out the very name of the infant Church. Then came the journey to Damascus, and that scene among the low hills of the desert some few miles from the city gate which was to change the foremost persecutor of Christ into the most devoted of His flock. And what was it that that scene brought home with irresistible power to the mind of Saul of Tarsus? Many truths, no doubt, but this, pre-eminently, that Jesus, of whom he had dreamed as stricken and silenced for ever in the stillness of the tomb, was alive and ruling men and events from the clouds of heaven. And how and since what date this had come to be Saul would have learnt from Ananias at Damascus, and still more so when he went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and James, and Thomas, and the penitent Magdalen, and the two disciples who walked to Emmaus, and as many as he would passing through Galilee, and those five hundred who had seen the risen Lord on one single occasion. On the great fact there was evidence enough and to spare, if only there was the mind open to receive it, and when the fact that Jesus Who was crucified had thus risen from the dead was established in the mind of Paul as a certainty beyond all discussion, how inevitably would it have changed his whole way of looking at

all else about Jesus! It was, then, Jesus, and not himself and his instructors, Who held the truth according to those ancient Scriptures; it was the teaching of Jesus, and not that of the rabbinical schools, which followed on in the direct line of Moses and the prophets. Those miracles of Jesus of which he had heard were only what might be expected from the Messianic prophecies; and this crowning wonder of all which Jesus had predicted as designed to follow on His death lifted yet further and more completely the veil that hung before the eyes of the astonished and humble rabbi, and showed that He Who could thus make the past and the present alike minister to His glory, He Who could rule at once in the conscience of men and mould at pleasure the forces on high, He Who could bend into utter submission the mind and the will of His stoutest adversary, must be indeed of more than human stature, must be indeed Divine. To St. Paul the resurrection was a revelation of the divinity of the Son of God made with power. It would be for St. Paul, and much more we may believe for those who saw the risen Redeemer once and again, conversed with Him, ate with Him, touched Him. Such certainly was the effect on the Apostle who was, it might seem, naturally of a sceptical turn of mind. Although, as our collect says, for the greater confirmation of the faith he was doubtful of Christ's resurrection, what was Thomas's exclamation when our Lord offered His hands and His side to the inquisitive touch of the Apostle? "My Lord and my God." Those five wounds in the risen body were a revelation not of Christ's manhood only, but of His deity. They proclaimed the veiled power that had conquered death. And so it has been ever since. The resurrection has been felt to be the fact which, beyond all others, proclaims Christ to man as the Son of God. When Judas had gone his way, the important requisite in his successor was that he was to be a witness to the resurrection. The resurrection was the burden of all the recorded preaching of the earliest Church; the Gospel it preached was the Gospel of the resurrection—whether in the mouth of Peter or Stephen or St. Paul, it was all the same. And at this moment all who think seriously on the matter know that the resurrection is the point at which the creed which carries us to the faith of heaven is most clearly embedded in the soil of earth; most really capable of asserting

a place for its Divine and living subject in the history of our race. Disprove the resurrection, and Christianity fades away into thin air as a graceful, but discredited illusion. But, as a certain fact, it does its work as at the first in every honest conscience and intellect. More than any other event, it proclaims Christ to be the Son of God with power in millions of Christian souls.

It is said, I know, that a wonder of this kind, however calculated to impress bygone generations, is not likely to weigh powerfully with our own, and on the ground that we, the men of to-day, are less struck by suspensions of natural law than by the unvarying order of things. Every age, no doubt, has its fashions in the world of thought and literature, no less than in the world of manners and dress; and if we survey a sufficient range of time, we shall see that these fashions in thought, or many of them, are not less liable to have their day, and to be discarded than the other fashions. Nor need a man be a prophet in order to predict that the fashion which professes to attach less importance to a proved fact which involves a suspension of natural law, whether by the intervention of a higher law or otherwise, than to the general course and regularity of nature, is a fashion that will not last. Of course, if a man says that no such suspension of natural law, no miracle, is possible, the question is a different and, in a sense, a more important one; but I am for the moment thinking of people who say that they deny neither the possibility nor the occurrence of miracle, and yet point with some sort of satisfaction to the fashionable temper of the time which does not think highly of the importance of miracle; and such a fashion I say will pass if only because it is out of harmony with the average common sense of human nature. When does a fellow-man attract our attention? Is it when he is acting as he is wont, or when he is acting in some manner which we did not anticipate, excelling himself, as we say, or falling below himself; a good man, as we thought him, falling into wickedness and being a partaker with adulterers; a bad man, as we thought him, rising to the heights of generosity and sacrifice; a wise man committing himself for the moment to some startling folly; a foolish man uttering some opinion the value of which commands the respect of the wise? And when the Ruler of the universe suspends His wanted

rules by such a miracle as the raising of the dead, the importance of His acts will not be disposed of by a passing mood of thought which, fresh from laboratories and observatories, thinks more of law than of the suspension of law. No, our Lord's rising declares to us, as it declared to our forefathers, the Divine Sonship of Jesus, and it will do this as it has done it hitherto "with power." We know what death is. We have known, most of us, at some moment in our lives what we would have given to be able to break its chain, and in the light of this experience we may own the true majesty of Him "who liveth and was dead; and, behold He is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death."

And, lastly, there is another sense in which the resurrection from the dead is a declaration with power that Jesus is the Son of God. No one can read the Epistles of St. Paul without observing that he constantly speaks of the crucifixion and the resurrection not only as events in the life of Jesus upon earth, but as spiritual transactions which take place within the Christian soul or character. He bids Christians to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." He says of himself, "I am crucified with Christ;" and addressing his readers at Ephesus, he quotes a Christian hymn of the earliest age, "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He exclaims in his epistle to his Colossian friends, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." It is true that this language of St. Paul is more particularly connected with the entrance of new converts into the Church of Christ by baptism. Conversion involved a crucifixion of the old corrupt nature, and then, as the new convert was dipped beneath the baptismal waters, and raised again by the minister of the sacraments, he was, in St. Paul's words, "Buried with Christ in baptism and raised again to newness of life." But although that is the first and more usual application of the Apostle's language, his language also applies to the circumstances of the altered life of baptized Christians who have fallen from God and from grace, and need to return to God by a fresh conversion. If the body of Christ could only rise once from the grave, the Christian soul may certainly need to rise a second time; may, after a fall from grace, need such a resurrection unless all is to be lost. And when such an event in the moral or spiritual

world takes place, it is strange if they who look on do not learn from it something that they had not known before about the Son of God. Is it nothing that a soul should lie in the grave of sin, and then, touched by a mighty inspiring voice bidding it arise and live, should pass forth to a new life, redeemed and purified? So it has been sometimes in youth, sometimes in middle life, sometimes in declining years, almost within sight of death, with men of the most opposite characters, and the most various positions, whose experiences of sin have been as unlike as possible. So it was in one age with Augustine, at once a man of cultivation and a libertine, whom one verse of the Apostle St. Paul made a saint and teacher of the Church; so it was with the profligate Earl of Rochester in the days of the restoration. So in our own time with the popular French atheist Taxil, who a few years ago devoted his whole time to propagating blasphemy against his Creator and Redeemer. So with Littré, the polished man of letters, from whose mental atmosphere, almost until the last hour had come, God was utterly shut out by a false philosophy. For each of these—the profligate philosopher, the debauched courtier, the atheistic lecturer, the refined but godless man of letters—God had His purpose and His hour of mercy, and each accepted it. You may some of you have known men, the bearers of less famous names than these, or living in private life, who have been the subjects of the spiritual resurrection. We may see the dead souls joined to bodies of activity and vigour, joined to minds of intelligence and force, but not on that account the less dead. Such a soul lies in the grave of sin; it is blind, deaf, dumb, motionless, cold, and putrid; it sees not the works of God in providence and life, His mercies, His judgments; it hears not the warnings of God in His Word, in His Church, in His inward appeals to conscience; it speaks not to God in prayer; it has neither the clear-sightedness nor the heart to pray; it is cold, so cold as to strike into every faculty a deadly chill, and, like Lazarus, it has already passed into a state of moral putrefaction, so long has it lain in the grave. And when such a soul hears the voice of the Son of God, when its eyes are open to behold His justice and His love, when it opens its ears to His warnings and His promises, when it opens its mouth to pray and to praise Him as the Author, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier of its life; when such a

soul exchanges its corruption for purity, its coldness for the glow of warm affections, bursts the bondages of habit and passes forth through the barriers that would fain detain it into light and freedom; when men around behold this, and note further how in such a soul risen and beautified love has taken the place of hatred, joy of sullen discontent, peace of restlessness, and long-suffering of an impatience with others and with God that knew no bounds, and faith of a distrust alike of man and of God, and temperance of a perfect chaos of insurgent passions; when they see the man who dwelt yesterday among the graves sitting to-day among the pure, clothed and in his right mind, and ask, "Who has done it? Who has thus changed that which offers to his will a much more stubborn resistance than the dust of a buried corpse, or the stone which closes the mouth of the sepulchre?" it is clear what must be the answer,—who but He Who, at the grave of Bethany, announced Himself as the Resurrection and the Life, and bade Lazarus come forth from his tomb, and Whose own resurrection is not merely an outward power to mould our thoughts, but an inward power to transform our very souls and characters? When the old Christians whom Saul of Tarsus had so cruelly wronged beheld his converted life, his clear intelligence, his warm affections, his true and strong will, all placed at the service of the Saviour Whom he but now had persecuted, what did they do? He himself shall answer: "They glorified God in me." And when in the Church of our day a soul rises from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, there goes forth—oh! be sure of it—into hundreds and thousands of consciences around the proclamation of the Divine power of the Son of God. God grant that this Easter the heart of the risen and glorified Jesus may be gladdened by many such a moral resurrection, and that we who witness it, and through His grace experience it, may know more and more surely, to our endless peace, who He is and what He can do. ✓

OUR PATTERN.*

"That we may grow up unto Him in all things which is the head, even Christ."—EPH. iv. 15.

HERE is a statement of the object or one of the objects for which the Church of Christ received her spiritual endowments from her ascended Lord. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." His purpose, the Apostle tells us, was to bring Christians to moral and spiritual perfection—"for the perfecting of the saints;" to advance the work for the sake of which the ministry had been instituted—"for the work of the ministry;" to build up the fabric of the Christian life in the Church and in the soul—"for the edifying of the body of Christ." A time should be looked forward to when in the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of Christ, Christians would reach a perfection which is described as "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." That perfection would contrast sharply with the old pagan life which had preceded it, when uncertainty and division had been the order of the day; when they had been as "children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." This new and higher life would be prompted by sincerity, governed by love, and its vital principle would be "to grow up unto Him in all things which is the head, even Christ." So St. Paul wrote thirty years, or more than thirty years, after the ascension; but the aspiration, the hope, the effort which he thus described would have taken at least some shape in Christian souls at a much earlier time, -- nay, we may be bold to say, immediately after the great events, the crucifixion and the resurrection, even during those forty days which we are now traversing in memory. During those days our Lord was still lingering on the earth, He was seen from time to time by a few or by many of His faithful followers; but the old period of intimate and unbroken companionship which had preceded the crucifixion had passed away. Memory can sometimes interpret events more accurately than present experience; it sees them in their true proportion, as the traveller sees the higher Alps in their great grandeur, not from the valley at their feet, but from the distant

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plain. In those forty days the disciples of Christ would have understood the meaning of their Master's life better than when they were with Him day after day in the villages and fields of Galilee, and now that He was preparing for His triumphal departure they would have discerned with increasing clearness, as to-day's collect says, that He had been given by the Eternal Father not merely to die as a sacrifice for sin, but also to live as an example of godly life, a model of what human life should be. They would have anticipated St. Paul's desire to "grow up unto Him in all things which is the head, even Christ," and the prayer which we have offered to-day, "that we may daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life."

Now, the most obvious truths are often the most overlooked. They do not provoke opposition and the defence which opposition calls forth, and, as a consequence, they are apt to be less before the minds of men than other truths which are much more disputable. If this were not the case, it would be unnecessary to observe that the first requisite for all good work is a good model. If a model does not exist it must be projected by the artist before he touches his brush or his chisel. He must have clearly placed before his mind's eye, and perhaps outlined in pencil or shaped in clay, the conception to which he hopes to give a lasting embodiment. Not to have a model is to waste time, skill, temper, material in efforts which have no promise of even moderate success, or of anything other or better than pathetic failure and confusion. Even the Almighty Artist, when He made the worlds, beheld the archetypal forms of things to which He was giving existence traced out in His co-equal wisdom, and no human workman, be he on a higher or a lower level in the school of production, can dispense with this first requisite, a model of that which he desires to achieve. When from this it is inferred that the moral or spiritual artist needs a model no less than the architect, or painter, or sculptor, it will perhaps be objected that moral or spiritual success is a matter not of workmanship so much as of growth. Each tree keeps close to the type of its species. The elm as it grows up has no model elm before it, and yet it does not wander away from its type into that of the oak or the beech; it grows and lives and dies an elm, and this not in obedience to any outward model, but by the spon-

taneous prompting from within and the law of its life. And the Apostle in the very words before us speaks of the Christian life also as a growth, a comparison which at first sight might appear to do away with the need of an external model. No metaphor, my brethren, can be pressed with impunity to warrant any conclusions beyond its immediate purpose, and when St. Paul speaks of the Christian life as a growth he does not forget that man is much more than a tree, that he is a being with a free, self-determining will. This will of man, both for good and evil, can very largely modify the growth whether of natural character and propensities or of spiritual powers and endowments within him. Undoubtedly the natural character which we inherit from our parents goes for a great deal. Much is said in our day, and with a large measure of substantial truth, about heredity, the transmission of a type of body and mind and character, from father to son, from one to another generation of a race; but this transmission is always subject to modifications on the part of the individual. Each separate will may mould into new varieties the type of life which has come down from the parent stock, and it is the sense of this liability to variation, possibly in a large number of cases for the worse, which makes each nation instinctively fix upon certain men who are held most perfectly to represent all that is best in it as models for the imitation of those who are just entering on their share in its life. Every country in Europe and England, not less than others, has its representative men, its heroes, some of them numbered with the dead, some of them still tarrying among us, though their day of active labour may have passed; and as we direct the attention of boys and of young men to these great Englishmen we say, "There, and there, and there is a model which in your measure, in your circumstances, according to your abilities, you should try to copy. Keep it before you, study the temper and the characteristics which it offers, and you will not disgrace the country which has produced it, the England which is also your own." Indeed, most of us do for ourselves practically feel the need of a model, and the natural thing for a well-disposed boy is to make a model of his father. His father, he assumes, is a sample of what a man should be, a model ready-made and placed by God's providence in his way, so that he should have daily and hourly opportunities of

studying it. A generous son will see nothing but what is good in his father, will admit no deficiencies in him that he can possibly help. Some forty years ago some friends were talking in the presence of John Keble, the poet, of the evils which pluralism—the holding by clergymen of more benefices than one at a time—had in bygone generations inflicted on the Church of England. “I don’t know,” observed Mr. Keble, somewhat briskly; “my father was a pluralist, and he was not a bad sort of person,” the fact being that the old clergyman had at one time in his life held two very small benefices at no great distance from each other. Certainly, pluralism of that kind was no great harm.

But what a serious consideration have we here for thoughtful parents,—that a bad or even a defective example on their part may do mischief in the exact ratio of the trustfulness and dutifulness of their children! Have we not lately had one terrible example of this brought home in the courts of public justice to every one in the country, showing, on even a tragical scale, that where a home is not ruled by love, where a father’s life presents nothing to his children that can win their affections or that can command their respect, deeds are possible which make ordinary murder seem by comparison tame and almost venial, deeds which even the heathen world would brand as the worst—since parricide most violently outrages the better feelings of unassisted human nature—that it is within the compass of human opportunity to achieve. There is indeed, a profound law of our human nature which alone explains the immense importance of a pattern or a model in life. Whether we will or not, we men do become like that which we admire. If our heroes should be men of ability, but not men of principle, more intent upon personal credit or success than upon the public advantage, more anxious to outwit opposition than to secure the triumph of what is right and true, we should insensibly but surely become like them too; and if they are men whose first idea is to promote, so far as they can, the reign of righteousness in themselves and among other men, amid whatever failures, and with whatever mistakes in detail as to what righteousness may imply or mean, we shall become in our measure, but to our great and lasting gain, like them too. In this matter we may adopt from another and a much

more solemn connection those words of the Apostle : "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy ; and as the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

A model, then, is a necessity in man's moral as well as in his artistic activities, and there are, at least, as many models as there are races of men, nations, callings in life, kinds of occupation. Is there any one model higher than these,—supreme, archetypal, a model not for the men of one trade or art, but for the men of all, not for one age or country or race, but for all ; a model not only for Englishmen or Frenchmen, for Europeans or Asiatics, for the men of the old or of the modern world, but for all ; a model for man as man, in gazing on whom, in admiring whom, in striving to imitate whom, man makes the very best he can of his manhood, gives scope and play to all in it that is highest and noblest, and carries it forward to those heights of excellence at which its real place in the universe, moral as well as material, is most clearly discerned ? Yes, the Apostle says, there is such a model—Jesus Christ, our Lord. He is the ideal man. His excellence is dwarfed by none of the limitations which make all other models less than universal in their value. Although a Jew, He belongs plainly to the races of the world ; although a peasant, He offers that which the greatest monarchs may do well to imitate ; although untrained in school or university, His majestic intelligence dwarfs down the wisdom of other men to the relative rank of crude guesses or a scarcely disguised nonsense ; although living on the world eighteen centuries ago, He is not less a model for the men of our day than for the men of His own. No one type of character or temperament has an unbalanced ascendancy in that supreme humanity, because all are represented, and all are kept in their due place. With our finite capacities we can, at the outside, only imitate Him piecemeal, and from generation to generation His servants have fixed one on this and another on that feature of His human excellence in the process of doing so. "I," exclaims one, "will copy His humility ;" and another, "I His charity ;" and another "I His patience ;" and another, "I His self-denial ;" and another, "I His tenderness with those who misunderstand Him ;" and another, "I His zeal for the Divine glory ;" and another, "I His compassion for the suffering ;" and thus the rays of moral beauty which centre in and proceed from the

Sun of Righteousness are distributed among His servants in varying measures of excellence; but all of them look up to Him, all know and feel and act upon the truth that He is the one standard of human perfection, all say with one voice, and in never-ending chorus, "Let us if we may, let us if we can, grow up unto Him in all things which is the head, even Christ."

But beyond this there is another level of attainment, to which the model offered us in our Lord invites us—I mean the perfect balance which He holds between what may appear to us to be incompatible forms of excellence. Ordinary goodness among men, as we may often observe, constantly means the practice of one virtue at the cost of another. It seems incapable of keeping its eye upon the whole circle of excellences while endeavouring to excel in one particular. In the supreme type of goodness there is no such one-sidedness or lack of balance as this. In Him no excellence is even stunted down by pressure into imperfect virtue or exaggerated by impulse into something that looks as though it were the confines of vice. Thus, in our Lord, complete detachment from the ordinary interests and pleasures of the world was combined with an address and manner as far as possible removed from the ostentation of austerity, and His unrivalled dignity of character, based on and inseparable from His inevitable consciousness of greatness, did not check a perfectly simple and lowly bearing with every human being that approached Him. In Him there is no opposition between public duties and private attachments, no such compassion for the sinner as to involve the semblance of indifference to sin, no such strong feelings about men or events as to imperil for a moment His perfect self-possession, no such calmness under opposition as to shade off into moral or intellectual lukewarmness about the truth. Illustrations might be extended, but in those which I suggest there is surely abundant material for our attention and our effort. The Apostle, beyond doubt, has a high ambition when he writes of Christians growing up to Christ in all things; he would have the lofty type of excellence, the great formative principles supplied by his Divine Master's example, appropriated by Christians in every department of public and private activity. Politics, literature, art, should be Christian no less than domestic life and philanthropy and worship. As

the supreme pattern, Christ has something to teach men in every district of human activity and in every sphere of effort; we are to aim at nothing less than growing "up unto Him in all things, which is the Head."

But here a difficulty might be interposed which we cannot put aside without consideration, because of late years it has been insisted on with ever-increasing pertinacity. We are reminded that according to the creed of the Church of Christ, Christ our Lord is much more than man, that He is the "only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." How, it is asked, can we imitate such a Being as is here described, even though He is made man and dwells on the earth in human form? We can imitate, it is urged, a perfectly good man who is merely a man; but if Christ is indeed so removed from us as the Church Belief implies, imitation seems to be out of the question; the only possible attitude of the human soul towards such a Being must surely be that of wonder and admiration. Undoubtedly, my brethren, the divinity of our Lord is the central truth of the creed of the Christian Church, and before it can be even modified the whole Gospel of St. John and no inconsiderable portion of the writings of St. Paul must be cut out of the Bible.

But does this faith destroy the value of our Lord's human life as a model for our imitation? Those who say so appear to assume that imitation is only possible when the sphere of life and the range of interests and opportunities are strictly the same in the imitation and the model, and this assumption would disqualify not merely our Lord but many good men and women from the office of an example to others. For instance, it is a matter of common remark that the Queen sets an example to her subjects of attention to domestic duties, and of care for the suffering and the distressed, which all of us might follow with very great advantage; and considering how far-reaching is the influence of the throne in a society constituted such as ours, it is difficult to overrate the moral gain to the country of such an example; but supposing a person should object that the Queen lives in so totally different a sphere of life—that she has interests, occupations, an outlook so essentially unlike that of her subjects, that any real imitation of her in the particulars specified is out of the question,—

would not the objection be felt to be irrational? We may indeed be unable to imitate the dealings of the Sovereign with her Ministers, with the foreign powers, with the questions of prerogative and the constitution. These things belong to an office with which she is, and we are not, entrusted; but she is not therefore beyond our imitation in the general principles of her conduct or in the sphere of duties which are common to her and to ourselves; and although the comparison is even infinitely below the purpose with which it is made, although the greatest of earthly monarchs is as nothing, or less than nothing, before the majesty of the King of kings, still the analogy holds good thus far, that the value of an example is not forfeited by the fact that the being who offers it is in certain respects beyond the reach of imitation. Our Lord's true divinity did not interfere with the truth of His manhood, or lessen—nay, surely, in some respects it enhanced—the value of the example which He set us, from those early years of submission in the holy home at Nazareth to that solemn hour on the cross when He commended His Spirit to the Father. Indeed, we may observe that excellence, like vice, is not a mere attribute of a living being; it is a thing in itself, no matter who offers an example of it. A lie is a lie whether it is uttered by the fallen archangel in Eden or by a child six years old in the nursery; and humility is humility whether it be practised by one of ourselves or by the Son of the Highest. Our Lord's Eternal Person does not make the virtues which are so apparent in His earthly life inimitable by us since they belong to that common nature which is ours by inheritance, and which, in His mighty love and condescension He took upon Himself. Certainly we cannot heal the sick, or still the tempest, or raise the dead; we cannot assume towards our brethren a bearing which implies that in us they will find inexhaustible sources of strength and consolation; we cannot die for the sins of the whole world, and rise again the third day and ascend to heaven; but we can each of us, in his place and sphere—though it be at an infinite distance—grow up towards the love of which these deeds of power and compassion were the magnificent expression; we can share the mind, though we cannot reproduce all the works, of our Divine and glorified Redeemer.

There is then, I submit, no real speculative difficulty which

bars imitation of Him ; but no doubt there are moral obstacles and motives which are wont to array themselves in intellectual finery, and with which we must grapple if we would not utterly fail. Self-love in all its forms is constantly holding us back from growing up to the standard of our Divine Head, and self-love must be conquered if we would see things as they are, if we would be as He would have us.

In order to be practical let us fix our attention for a few minutes earnestly on one very prominent excellence in our Lord's human example,—an excellence about which, happily, there is no room for controversy, and which, if difficult of imitation, is yet imitable by and incumbent upon every one of us,—I mean His superiority to injuries. Christians often cherish a spirit of retaliation and revenge, but they know that they are wrong in this because both by precept and example Jesus Christ has told them so. When our Lord appeared upon the earth, the right and duty of revenge for injuries was almost universally recognised. A few philosophers timidly hinted that it might be a mistake, but no one had as yet taught men to realise their true greatness by showing kindness and attention to opponents and persecutors, in imitation of the disinterested providence of the Father in heaven. Our Lord's precept was, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." And why? "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And what He taught He practised, especially during His passion, when no wrongs, no insults could provoke Him to any act or word that was inconsistent with His universal charity, or that could check or even chill the prayer, "Father, forgive them." As St. Peter reminds us in the Epistle for to-day, "when He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

It has been thought that a special danger to Christians attaches to neglect of any human excellence that was especially conspicuous in our Lord's earthly life, and certainly the history of the Early Church offers at least one illustration of how much may depend upon the growing up to Jesus Christ in matters where there is no doubt whatever about the force of

His example or about the possibility of imitating it. Some of you, probably, know something of the well-authenticated history of Sulpicius. After the issue of his second edict against the Christians by the Emperor Valerian, in the year of our Lord 258, Sulpicius, a presbyter of Antioch of high authority, was arrested and brought in the course of justice before the imperial legate. The usual questions were asked and answered: "What is thy name?" "Sulpicius." "Of what family art thou?" "I am a Christian." "Art thou a priest or a layman?" "I am of the order of presbyters." "Very well; know then our august lords, the Emperors Valerian and Gallienus, have ordered that all who call themselves Christians should sacrifice to the immortal gods; if any despise this edict he is to be tortured and put to a cruel death." "We Christians," replied Sulpicius, "have for our king Christ, who is also God; He is the true God, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is therein: the gods of the nations are evil spirits." Sulpicius was then put to the torture, and when he had endured this with great patience he was taken away to be beheaded. As he was on his way to execution a Christian, called Nicephorus, rushed forward and fell at his feet. Between him and Sulpicius there had been a dispute over some trifle, followed by a coolness of long standing, and Nicephorus felt that he must win, if he could, forgiveness from and reconciliation with Sulpicius while there was time. "Martyr of Christ," he cried, "Martyr of Christ, forgive me, for I have wronged thee." Sulpicius did not reply. A little further on Nicephorus repeated his request. Sulpicius still took no notice of him. The pagans asked Nicephorus what he expected to get from a fool who was on his way to a well-deserved punishment, but Nicephorus renewed his prayer, even when the place of execution had been reached, and still Sulpicius was inexorable; he still maintained that persistent, that significant silence, and then there ensued a scene which struck all the beholders with astonishment, which struck the Christians with awe. It seemed as if Sulpicius, who had not flinched under the torture, was growing paler as he beheld the sword of the executioner. "Kneel down," said the lictors, "kneel down, Sulpicius, that thou mayest be beheaded." "Why should I?" said Sulpicius. "Because," said they, "thou hast refused to

sacrifice to the gods; thou has despised the edict of the august Emperors Valerian and Gallienus." "Do not strike me," cried the unhappy Sulpicius; "I obey the emperors; I will sacrifice." Once more Nicephorus rushed forward, and this time it was to implore Sulpicius not to forfeit the heavenly crown which was already well nigh won by so much previous agony; but it was all in vain. "Then," said Nicephorus, "I will take his place; tell the legate there that I am a Christian," and he was forthwith taken at his word. That history sank deep into the heart of the ancient Church. The fall of Sulpicius was quoted to show that the greatest of all sacrifices which a man can offer—the sacrifice of his life—is not accepted on high when it is offered by those who have not learned from Jesus Christ how to pardon injuries. That attainment to the standard set before us by our Lord in His human life is wholly impossible without aid from God is a truth of which those persons will be most surely convinced who have endeavoured to achieve it. "Without Me you can do nothing" is a word from heaven that is ever sounding in our ears. "Christ *in* you is the hope of glory," not only of heavenly glory after death, but also of the moral and spiritual glory which is possible for Christ's servants here on earth. By His Spirit, by His sacraments, our Lord takes up His abode in the soul and body of a Christian, and makes him what, left to his own natural resources, he never could be. If in the Church of Jesus Christ men have not been merely moral, but also holy—not merely courageous, and faithful, and sober, but also humble, and self-sacrificing, and unworldly, this is because a higher force has taken possession of them, and has made them what of themselves they could not be. If you would grow up unto Christ, pray for a larger outpouring in your souls of His Holy Spirit, make frequent and devout use of His holy sacraments, and of other means of grace, and be quite sure that what is impossible for man is possible with God. But as you grow, remember that you are also free agents. Keep your eye fixed on the Great Model. "There is one thing," said John Bowdler, an excellent layman of the Church of England in the last generation, and he said it when he was on his death-bed, "There is one thing that I regret more than anything else in life, and that is that I have not always set before me every morning of my life some one

saying or action of our Lord Jesus Christ for my guidance and imitation throughout the day."

Certain it is that as time passes, whether we will or not, we are growing in some sense, growing up to something. Neither the soul nor the body of man is ever stationary. They say that within seven years the whole substance of man's body changes by the mere processes of exhaustion and nutrition, and who that watches what goes on in that more important part of his being, the soul, can be insensible to the changes, many and profound, that must surely come with the lapse of time? Neither feeling nor thought are ever stationary. Growth and decay are always in progress; but the vital question is, What is it that is decaying and what is it that grows? Is it what the Apostle calls epigrammatically "the old man" that is decaying, or is it the "new"? Is it the "new man created in Christ Jesus, in righteousness and true holiness," who is growing, or is it the "old"? A vital question most assuredly for all of us, especially as life draws towards its close, and the day approaches when the result of all such growth and change will become fixed and unalterable.

" Surely the time is short,
 Endless the task and art
 To brighten for the ethereal Court
 A soiled earth-drudging heart.
But the dread Proclaimer of that hour
Is pledged to thee in love as to thy foes in power."

One of "The Great Sermons" in
Glorious Sermons.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.*

“He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”—JOHN xvi. 14.

THIS is the heart of the promise which our Saviour made to His disciples, when, with the feelings of bewilderment and desolation that were natural at the time, they were gathered round Him in the supper-room. The day, they felt, was near when they would no longer see and hear, at any rate, as heretofore, the wise and gracious Friend who had taught, and was teaching, them so much that was best worth knowing. And He did not directly combat or relieve the sad anticipation. Nay, He told them frankly that He was leaving them; that in a little while they would not see Him, because He was going to the Father. But His place, He said would be taken by another who would not disappoint them; but who would only arrive when He had Himself departed. “If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” And what was this Envoy and Successor to achieve when He did come? He was, no doubt, to change the hearts and minds of those who were outside the sacred fold. He was to “convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” But He was also to do a yet greater service for the orphaned Church. “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the

* Preached before the University, at St. Mary's, Oxford, on Whit-Sunday, 1890.

Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." . . . "He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." . . . "He shall glorify Me; for he shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

That this promise would be kept became clear to the apostles on that solemn occasion, the anniversary of which the Church observes to-day. When the crucified and risen Lord had ascended into heaven there was an interval of hushed and awful expectation before the promised Comforter came down. And when He came, essential Spirit though He was, He condescendingly came in such guise that the senses of men should apprehend His approach. He came as a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind; His arrival was portrayed in tongues like as of fire, which rested upon the apostles; it was followed by such sudden endowment of a band of Galilean peasants with a gift of speech in various dialects as to astonish a mixed multitude of men who represented almost every race and district between the Tiber and the Euphrates. These were but outward signs, marking the advent of a supernatural power; this was the birthday of the Church of Christ. As our Lord Jesus Christ Himself had been conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, so the society, which was to perpetuate among men His mind and His life, sprang from a kindred union between the Eternal Spirit, and a sample—sufficiently poor and unrepresentative it might have seemed, yet still a sample—of our common humanity; and thus the little community, hallowed and invigorated from on high, entered on the career which has

already lasted for nearly nineteen centuries, and which will end only with the close of time.

I. We have to consider, first of all, that particular account of the work of the Holy Spirit which our Lord here sets before us—"He shall glorify Me." The prediction belongs to that class of His sayings which only admits of moral justification if the speaker is indeed more than man. Natural modesty and good taste, not to speak of distinctively Christian virtues, would make such language impossible in the mouth of any honest and humble man who knew himself to be no more than man, and was conscious of the failure and weakness which in every merely human life must so largely outweigh any solid claims to glory or renown. And our Lord's words cannot be understood to foretell any gradual accumulation and wreathing of titles or doctrines round His person by the devotional or speculative activity of a later time, if, in fact, He had no exact right to that which they implied. No being, whether divine or human, is really glorified by having anything ascribed to him which is not his. The Cæsars were not glorified; they were only made ridiculous, as the wiser of them saw, by official or popular apotheosis. In proportion to a man's perception of the truth of things and the directness and integrity of his moral nature is his dislike of any exaggerated praise. And when we give glory to God we do not and cannot add to that which already belongs to Him; we only make a place in our own hearts, and, it may be, in the hearts of others, for some more adequate apprehension than as yet exists of what He is and what is His due.

When, then, our Lord said that the Spirit of truth would glorify Him, He meant only that the Spirit of truth would enable men to do justice to the real character of His life and

Person. And there was then, as generally, causes enough at work to make such assistance needful. There were the passions of powerful classes, which made up the great majority of His countrymen, and which were bent on nothing less than casting out His very name as evil. There was the ordinary decay of memory, which would in a few years overtake His most intimate companions. And there was the more perilous activity of fancy, which might substitute for the preservation and exhibition of facts the fictions, or at least the decorative embellishments, of theory or enthusiasm.

A great deal is said about the power and endurance of posthumous influence; but after all how little can a man generally reckon on it! It is, in ordinary human experience, out of a man's keeping; it takes its own course, or the course which events prescribe for it. It falls into the hands of some clever adventurer and is manipulated for his own purposes; or it is of a kind to discover unsuspected ingredients, any one of which in its exaggeration may give it a fatally false turn; or it is crowded out of its due place by more vigorous and self-asserting competitors for public favour; or it shows early symptoms of being in a decline, and presently dies of exhaustion. A posthumous influence! It is wedded to a philosophy like that of Socrates, which may presently break up into two or more contending schools of thought; or it is embodied in a political inheritance, like that of Alexander, which may be distributed among three or four successors, whose jealous rivalries are fatal to its permanent integrity; or it is a literary or artistic tradition, which, in the mere act of passing into other keeping, is transformed or dissolved through contact with new and powerful minds. A posthumous influence! It must—alas!—be made over to the care of others; whether

they be foes or friends ; whether children or disciples. The biography of a modern philosopher has taught us that friends may not always be its safest guardians ; Marcus Aurelius lived long enough to discover what weight would be attached to his meditations when the Cæsar Commodus would alone represent the Antonines on the throne of the world ; and history has again and again shown how disciples may pay compliments to a departed master, while they set aside his clearest and most emphatic instructions. And thus the preacher might seem in one mood of his thought to express the sombre reality—"Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool so it happeneth even to me ; and why was I then more wise ? Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever : seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. . . . Yea ! I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool ? . . . This, also, is vanity" (Eccles. ii. 15-19).

That, therefore, which must strike us in the words of our Lord is His conscious superiority to the fate which may be commonly expected to befall the influence of a man's character or teaching after death. He had put His life and work into such sort of keeping that it would be unaffected by the varying moods of human minds and the incalculable contingencies of human circumstances. And how would the promised Guardian of Christ's glory set about His work ?

First of all, by exerting a transforming, purifying, invigorating influence upon human characters.

No merely natural account can be given of the change which is observable in the Apostles between the eve of the Crucifixion

and the morrow of Pentecost. The perplexed, doubting, timid, half-suspicious, gloomy peasants, who misunderstand their Master's words and shrink from His side in the hour of danger, have been transformed into men conscious of being the trustees of a supernatural creed, and more than willing—aye, joyful—at any moment to attest its truth with their lives. And in the great apostle, whose experience was so different from that of the eleven, a profound transformation of character, as well as of purpose, is no less observable. As he preached the faith which once he destroyed men recognised, he says, a Higher Power that had wrought the change—"They glorified God in me" (Gal. i. 14).

And in after years, as we know from the genuine acts of the martyrs, the Holy Spirit gave glory to the unseen Christ, by displaying again and again before the eyes of the heathen the courage, and patience, and meekness, and dignity of His suffering servants. Nor is it otherwise at the present day. There are lines, well known to some of you, which describe at least one actual, and probably a not uncommon, experience:—

"I saw thee once, and naught discerned
For stranger to admire :
A serious aspect, but it burned
With no unearthly fire.

"Again I saw, and I confessed
Thy speech was rare and high ;
And yet it vexed my burdened heart,
And scared—I knew not why.

"I saw once more, and awestruck gazed
On face and form and air ;
God's living glory round thee blazed
A saint—a saint was there."—*Lyr. Apost.*

And the glory of our Lord was further promoted when the

Holy Spirit organised a visible body—the Christian Church. The Church was not an afterthought, founded by men, who, finding that they thought and felt alike, combined to form an association which could enable them the better to work together, and might secure weight and currency for their convictions. The Church already existed as a home of souls on the day of Pentecost. And for a believer to belong to it was a matter of necessity, not of propriety or choice. And apart from its faith, its life, its perpetual, scarcely observed, but incessant and resistless expansion, nothing is more wonderful in the early ages than its coherence. It is less remarkable that the Church was not crushed to death by relentless persecutions than that she was not tempted to make terms with the pagan Syncretism which was especially in vogue, for instance, in the second and third quarters of the third century. From Elagabalus down to Aurelian a constant series of efforts were made to induce the Church to mingle her creed and life with one or another of the conglomerate forms of decaying paganism. So cleverly were the sacraments and rites of Christianity reproduced at one period by the priests of Mithra, that St. Augustine, referring to it, could, almost humorously exclaim, “Mithra Christianus est.” But it was all to no purpose. A few gnostics might yield to the spell. The great Catholic body would have nothing to do with it, though refusal meant a renewal of persecution. The truth was that the business of the Church, informed by the Holy Spirit, was to uphold in undiminished lustre the unshared, unapproachable glory of the Redeemer; and her separate existence witnessed to it in the ratio of the dangers whether of violence or seduction to which she was exposed. The question how she still came to be there could only be answered in the minds of thoughtful

men by reference to the unique Person of her Lord. She was there to proclaim His glory.

For this witness of the Church was not that of a voiceless or inert body. She spoke through great saints and writers whose words commanded the attention of the world; she spoke through assemblies which, before the division of East and West, represented, either by delegation or by subsequent consent, the whole of the company to which the promise had been made in the supper-room. Can we fail to see the hand of Providence in this—that before the separations had taken place which suspended the action of the collective Church, every question had been asked and answered that could bear upon the personal glory of the Redeemer; from the truth of His divinity down to the separate reality of His human will? In those days of eager speculation, and sincere, if not always instructed belief, there was, indeed, many a wave of unhallowed passion surging round the eternal truths at stake; but the informing, presiding, chastening Spirit rode the storm, and not many a thoughtful man, it may be supposed, who begins by believing that Christ's words are true, can trace the action of the Church in the great Conciliar period without feeling himself in the presence of a Power, the law of whose action is revealed in the promise—"He shall glorify Me."

Thirdly, and especially, the glorification of the ascended Christ was achieved by the creation of a new sacred literature—the Books of the Canon of the New Testament. The Church is, indeed, historically older than the New Testament; but the New Testament is the supreme work of the Holy Spirit when glorifying Christ in the Church. Pentecost had not long passed when a group of biographers and letter-writers appeared upon the scene of Christendom, each re-

taining whatever was characteristic and individual in expression and style, yet so controlled by a unifying and illuminating Power as to combine harmoniously in the setting forth many sides of a single truth. There were, indeed, among the first teachers of the Church minds so divergent by temper and genius, that had all, indeed, depended upon merely human influences, had there been no supernatural bond of unity, they would assuredly have parted into irreconcilable factions. As it is, nothing is more discernible than the controlling and modifying action of God the Holy Spirit in the New Testament writings.

St. Matthew and St. Luke enable us to observe how St. Mark and St. John are only recording different aspects of a single life; the sermons and discourses reported in the Acts and the First Epistle of St. Peter, discover the point of unity between the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians on the one side, and the Epistle of St. James on the other. The Eternal Spirit presides like the leader of a great choir over instruments and voices of the most various compass; and while each contributes something which no other can give, all are duly subordinated to a single will, directed to a supreme end. Look through the Apostolic writings and say whether there be any one motive in them so constant or so powerful as the giving His due place and honour in the thoughts and lives of men to our Lord and Saviour. Each evangelist glorifies one aspect of His life; whether it be His fulfilment of prophecy, or His true humanity, or His redemptive mission and work, or His pre-existent and personal Divinity. Each writer of Epistles, or each group of Epistles, sets forth some one truth which shall add to our apprehension of Him; whether it be His example of patience, as in

St. Peter, or His lessons of love, as in St. John, or His perfect law of liberty, as in St. James, or His Second Coming, or His justification of the sinner, through faith in His blood, or the transcendent qualities and ordered structure of His mystical Body, the Church, as in St. Paul. Whatever else may be divergent in the apostolic writings, this is the note of their underlying unity of aim: everywhere we trace in them the fulfilment of the promise, "He shall glorify Me."

II. This leads us to consider the method employed by the promised Comforter: "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it into you."

Here let us remark that our Lord does not sanction any of those conceptions of the work of the Holy Spirit which treat it as something independent of His own. The Spirit is not the author of a new dispensation: He perpetuates, explains, expands the teaching and work of Jesus Christ: "He shall not speak of Himself," "He shall take of Mine." Therefore is He called, in the Apostolic writings, not only the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ; since it is Christ's mind and teaching—aye, and Christ's renewed human nature, which He conveys to the souls of men.

(a) If, then, we examine the three great departments of the Holy Spirit's work in the inverse order to that followed just now, let us observe, first, how He takes of the things of Christ and exhibits them to the Church in the New Testament writings. The first five books of the New Testament are biographical or historical. Popular language often assumes that inspiration must always create; but if this were true there could be no such thing as inspired history. If history be the faithful record of facts, the function of inspiration in history must be limited to the grouping of facts, to the

assigning to certain facts a relative prominence, above all to the selection out of a large number of facts of those facts which illustrate a particular aspect of higher truth. Popular language is wont to speak disparagingly of the copyist or the reporter, but the inspiring Spirit did not by any means abhor the work of the reporter or copyist; His inspiration consisted often enough in guidance to select from a large field those materials which would best illustrate the truth He had in view, and to exhibit them in such wise as to secure this object most effectively.

This faculty of judicious selection is higher and rarer than may be at first supposed. To select wisely out of an embarrassingly large assortment of facts and thoughts requires a combination of penetration and resolve, in order to perceive what is really worth preserving, and to resist the seductions of what is not. Without this gift one writer will bury his true purpose beneath a mass of ill-selected and undigested details; while another will not exhibit details sufficient to give his subject the body and outline which it demands. Sometimes books even of high excellence in other respects, and which have laid the world under such great obligations, as, for instance, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, may give us reason to regret that their authors have not used more freely certain sources of knowledge which must have been before them, or that they have not touched some matters on which they are discursive with a lighter hand. They may have many merits. But they lack the inspiration of selection.

Now, contrast with this the work of the Holy Spirit in the composition of the Gospels. The supernatural is always haunted by its counterfeit; but the Holy Spirit at once swept aside a mass of legends such as are handed down to us in

a somewhat later shape by the New Testament apocryphal literature. Nay more, He took only some of the true words and acts of Christ. Christians might well believe that no acts or words of the Son of God during His earthly life could have been without high import of some kind. But they were not all equally useful for the specific purposes of the several evangelists. Each Gospel bears traces of being a selection from a larger assortment of materials; the last says expressly that "there are many other things which Jesus did" (John xxi. 25), and which the evangelist had not recorded. Each writer having clearly before him that aspect of the life of Jesus which it was his task to illustrate—whether Messianic, or human, or redemptive, or Divine—traverses with this object the stores of his own memory, or the recitals and reports of other eye-witnesses, and records just so much as is needed for his purpose. Each fulfils the prediction—"He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

The same principle of selection, although it is differently applied, meets us in the apostolic epistles. A phrase of Jesus becomes in the hands of an apostle the warrant of a doctrine, which is thus seen to have been always latent in it. The title "Son of man," for instance, reappears in St. Paul as the "Second Adam," the ideal representative of mankind, whose work is placed in vivid contrast with that of the first father of our race. A word about "giving His life a ransom for many," or "My blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins," warrants St. Paul and St. John in teaching a propitiatory atonement which wins for sinners pardon and peace. A self-proclamation, not less observable in the Synoptists than in St. John, constantly repeated and so unlimited in its scope that if it were not

rendered necessary by the facts of the speaker's consciousness, it would be fatal to those moral qualities which win the love and respect of men, issues in the great passages of St. Paul on the Divinity of Christ which thus takes its place as the cardinal truth of the Christian creed. These are but samples of the manner in which the Spirit took of the words of Christ and showed their full meaning to the Church in the apostolic letters.

Nor was this method of selection from and interpretation of existing materials a new procedure of the Spirit in the apostolic age. He then did what He had done in ages before the Incarnation. As we say in the Creed, He spake by the prophets; and the prophets in the sense of the Creed are not only members of the particular order which was endowed with a supernatural faculty for interpreting the Divine will, whether at the passing moment or in the more or less remote future, but also the leading rulers, statesmen, and historians who were entrusted with the guidance of the people of Revelation. And the records of their work, as the authors of the historical books tell us, were largely compiled out of documents already in existence. One historian borrows from another—nay, even one prophet from another—while the Spirit takes now and again from the conglomerate mass of early traditions or records those fragments which had on them the mint-mark of the Eternal Word, and shows them in a new and inspired combination to His ancient people.

And thus we are led to notice a feature common both to the Old and the New Testaments—the startling presence of what may at first sight appear to be foreign elements in the Sacred Book. The early history of Genesis may suggest traditions which had belonged to ancient pagan peoples living in the

great Mesopotamian plain ; the original text of its early genealogies may lie buried, as a distinguished Oxford scholar has suggested (Professor Sayce), at Kirjath Sepher, or elsewhere, in brick libraries as yet unexamined ; the sacred utensils and buildings of Israel, though consecrated to the worship of the Alone Eternal, may have been shaped more or less upon Egyptian models ; its later literature may betray affinities—however we explain them—with Persian forms of thought. Nay, the sacred tongue itself, which was selected to be the vehicle of that earlier Revelation, was not, as was once supposed, unique ; it was spoken, like Greek, by neighbouring pagans as well, and, as in the Moabite stone, it sometimes heralded the praise of pagan deities. These and such like facts have been pointed to as showing that the Jewish Revelation did not come from God in any but a merely naturalistic sense. What they really show is that the inspiration which dictated its worship and its sacred records was largely an inspiration of selection.

In like manner the New Testament presents us with facts supplementary to the Old Testament narrative, and often only derived from later Jewish traditions. Such are the prophecy of Enoch ; the double call of Abraham from Ur, as from Haran ; the hope that sustained Abraham in offering Isaac : the names of the Egyptian magicians ; the motive of Moses for leaving the Court of Pharaoh, and Egypt ; the exclamation of Moses at Sinai ; the rock that followed the Israelites in the desert ; the prayer of Elijah for rain.

Again, St. Paul employs Rabbinical arguments and modes of exegesis ; and he quotes heathen authors not to refute, but to endorse them.

In instances like these, too, the words are fulfilled, “ He

shall take of Mine." For the Speaker in the supper-room is none other than the Eternal Word who is announced in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel. "His" are not only the sayings and acts of the Incarnate Christ, but whatever is true in the earlier history and thought of our race. Inspired men, like Melchizedek, and Balaam, and Job, were discoverable beyond the fence of race with which the Divine wisdom had guarded His earlier Revelation; and, indeed, in all ages, here and there, in the desert wastes of heathendom there are to be met with patches of spiritual beauty—flowers which, alike by creation and by culture, are His, who nevertheless ever had in the world only one garden for the human soul, and who did make Israel His people and Jacob His inheritance, before in the last days He spoke by His Son.

One work of the Holy Spirit is to collect these outlying and—may I say it?—less regular creations of the Divine mind; it is to disinter the gems that lie hidden beneath the accumulated soil of ages; it is to bring to a focus the rays of light scattered throughout heathendom, and to exhibit their place in the true self-revelation of God.

For if the Holy Spirit thus selects materials from imperfect or false systems, He does not thereby sanction these systems as a whole, or even imply that those portions of them which He does not employ are after the mind of God. The quotation from the book of Enoch does not prove that the whole of that composition is inspired. The traces of Egyptian influence in the Mosaic ritual and legislation do not imply wholesale approval of the Egyptian theology. The prologue of St. John does not permit the Apostle of Love to a general sanction of the speculations of Philo. Rabbinical arguments, which may be found here and there in St. Paul's epistles, do not mean

that all other reasonings current in the Rabbinical schools are valid or even legitimate. An adoption of the particular Jewish tradition about the rock that followed the Israelites in the desert does not commit the apostle to an approval of all the legendary stories that were already current in the Israel of his day. To quote a line from Epimenides, or Aratus, or Menander did not imply that every fragment of these writers had the sanction of apostolic authority. The inspiration of selection sanctions that which it selects, and nothing beyond.

(b) There is now, unhappily little time for tracing the selective method of the Holy Spirit in the organisation and creeds of the Church. Even if it could be shown that in the apostolic age the presbyterate was certainly modelled upon Jewish and the episcopate on Gentile precedents, this would not of itself affect the question of their necessity to the true form and life of the Christian society. But the selective action of the Spirit is especially observable in the Church's use of ancient philosophy. The varying phases of that attitude were determined by the capacity of this or that school to furnish materials that in a given set of circumstances would assist the supreme work of the Spirit among men. In one century Platonism was distrusted as a solvent dangerous to Christian belief; in another it was laid under contributions by Christian writers, and even furnished terminology to the Catholic creed. Early Fathers may ban Aristotle; yet he is subsequently preferred to Plato, as not venturing upon topics as to which nothing can be known certainly without a revelation. The Church is led to reject such a symbol as the Homoousian at one while for reasons which are perfectly compatible with her adoption of it at another. The subject is too large to be more than hinted at. In this field, too, the Spirit is constantly

choosing whatever has really come from the word and wisdom of the Father and can be, at a given time and place, made servicable to the interests of His people.

As we follow the Holy Spirit in this department of His work, we may venture without presumption to observe that His action is limited by His own attributes. He is the Spirit of truth, not only because it is the truth which He teaches, but also because He Himself is true. Therefore He cannot contradict Himself. If, for instance, He really through the Sixth Council pronounced Honorius to be an heretic, He cannot in our day have pronounced Honorius by implication to be infallible. Nor can He take into His service literary fictions which trifle with the law and the sense of truth. If it could really be shown that the addresses ascribed to Moses in Deuteronomy were the composition of a writer of the age of Josiah, who desired to secure for later legal decisions or institutions the countenance of the great lawgiver; or, that speeches attributed to David in the Book of Chronicles were never uttered by the real David at all, but only represent the opinion of a sacerdotal scribe after the exile as to what David, if properly instructed, would or should have said; or—that passages in Daniel which claim to be predictions of still future events are really a history of events which the writer had himself witnessed, and are thrown into a predictive form, in order to invigorate national enthusiasm at a critical moment by the spectacle of the imaginary fulfilment of a fictitious prophecy; or—that the discourses of our Lord reported by St. John are not the *ipsissima verba* of the same Son of man who speaks in the Synoptic gospels, but only the voice of some Christian of the second century, or earlier, whose thought had been steeped in the Platonised Judaism of

Alexandria,—or, perhaps, of the Apostle of Love, who however, could not distinguish clearly between his own and his Divine Master's words ; or—that the sermons of St. Peter and St. Paul in the Acts resemble each other too closely to have been really uttered by those apostles, and only represent a literary effort to produce ecclesiastical harmony in the sub-apostolic age ; or—that the pastoral Epistles of St. Paul, although expressly claiming to be his work, were in fact composed when the struggle with Gnosticism had obliged the Church to create a more elaborate organisation, and are largely due to an endeavour to procure for this organisation the sanction of the great apostle's name ;—if, I say, these and other suchlike theories which might be mentioned could be shown to be based on fact it surely would be shown at the same time that the Holy Spirit could not have inspired the writings in question. He is not responsible for speeches which cultivated pagans like Thucydides or Tacitus could naturally and without scruple put into the mouth of their heroes. Those great writers had no more the Divine law of truth upon their hearts and consciences than they had the Divine laws of love or purity ; and nothing depends upon the historical worth of those fictitious speeches of theirs beyond the degree and quality of literary entertainment which we at this day may or may not derive from them. It is quite otherwise when we pass within the sacred precincts of the canon of Scripture. If the Holy Spirit is in any degree concerned in the production of its contents we may at least be sure that language is not used in it to create a false impression, and that that which claims, on the face of it, to be history is not really fiction in an historical guise. The Book of Truth cannot belie either the laws of truth or the Spirit and Source of truth.

(c) Once more, observe how the Holy Spirit gradually builds up or develops the Christian character. He takes of Christ's teaching and example, and shows it in its attractive beauty to the Christian conscience. This work of His is always going forward in those who will. As we pass through life the Holy Spirit, while endowing us through sacramental channels with the new humanity of the Redeemer, discovers to us more and more the splendour and import of His person and work. We have learnt, or think that we have learnt, something of truth, and we are suddenly startled at the deeper meanings of the Parable of the Sower. We have succeeded to an estate or we have won academical honours, and we learn the import of the Parable of the Talents. Our thoughts have been led to dwell on the great problems of capital and labour, wealth and poverty, which are so prominent in the modern world, and we see a new significance in the history of Dives and Lazarus, and in the precept given to the rich young man. We have been brought up to measure the worth of men by some class or artificial prejudice, and the position assigned to the Good Samaritan, though we have read about his going down to Jericho all our lives, flashes at a certain moment upon our thoughts as an overwhelming discovery. We have come to suppose that spiritual liberty implies the rejection of all outward authority, and the Holy Spirit reminds us of the words about even the Scribes and Pharisees who sit in Moses' seat. We have wandered, it may be, from the path on which in earlier and happier years our feet had been set to go, and we find guidance and consolation as nowhere else in the story of the prodigal son. We are getting on in life, and mapping out, with ambitious confidence, a future which God, perhaps, knows will never be ours; and we are brought to our senses by the record of the

man who would pull down his barns and build greater on the eve of the very night on which his soul was required of him. And all through life, and assuredly not less as life is drawing towards its close, the great doctrines of redemption and grace are brought home with new power and clearness to the hearts and consciences of those who will. These are lessons which may make Pentecost a perpetual reality, and bridge over the interval between the most prosaic of lives and companionship with that incomparable life which was lived nineteen centuries ago on the shores of the sea of Galilee.

And our Lord's words furnish us with a decisive criterion of the exact worth of dominant influences around us, of currents of thought which, now and again, would sweep us imperilously along with them, of the temper of our own time, of the *Zeitgeist*. It is natural to us to think that the days in which we live are wiser and better than any before, and that in throwing our thoughts without restraint into the main currents of the hour we are doing the best we can with our short span of life. And yet we might observe that many a past generation has cherished this notion of an absolute value attaching to the thought and temper of its day, while we, as we look back on it, with the aid of a larger experience, can see that it was the victim of an illusory enthusiasm. When we analyse the ingredients that go to make up the spirit of the time, of any one phase of time, and when we observe that, notwithstanding its stout assertions of a right to rule, it melts away before our very eyes like the fashions of a lady's dress, into shapes and moods which contradict, with equal self-confidence, its former self, we may hesitate before we listen to it as if it were a prophet, or make a fetish of it, as though it had within it a concealed divinity. The spirit of any generation may have,

must have, in it some elements to recommend it ; but assuredly it has also other and very different elements, and the question is whence do they come, and whither are they drifting ? All that is moving, interesting, exciting in the world of ideas, in the successive conceptions of the meaning and purpose of life that flit across the mental sky, is not necessarily from, nor does it necessarily tend towards, the Source of good. The mere movement of the ages does not in itself imply a progress from lower to higher truth, from darkness to light ; movement is possible in more directions than one. "Brethen," exclaims an apostle to some of his flock, to whom every claimant for speculative sympathy seems to have been welcome, "brethren, believe not every spirit ; but try the spirits whether they are of God. . . . Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God ; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God " (1 John iv. 1-3).

The test of the true worth of the spirit of our day—of the spirit which rules our own thoughts and lives—is the saying, "He shall glorify Me." All that wins for the Divine Redeemer more room in the thoughts and hearts of men ; all that secures for Him the homage of obedient and disciplined wills ; all that draws from the teachings of the past and the examples of the present new motives for doing Him the honour which is His eternal due, may be safely presumed to come from a Source higher than any in this passing world, and to have in it the promise of lasting happiness and peace. And, for the rest—

"Sunt multa fucis illita
Quae luce purgentur Tua,
Tu vera Lux coelestium
Vultu sereno illumina."

SELF-JUDGMENT.*

“If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”—I. COR. xi. 31.

THE apostle's immediate object is to save his flock at Corinth, or, at any rate, some part of it, from the penal consequences of receiving the Holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ unworthily. In those early days the Holy Communion was sometimes administered—at any rate at Corinth—on the occasion of an Agape, or Love Feast, a kind of public club dinner, having for its object the promotion of kindly feelings and intercourse between different classes in the Christian Church, but having nothing to do with the celebration of the Holy Sacrament itself. The provisions for the Love Feast would have been supplied by the wealthier members of the Church. It was a recognition on their part of the Christian doctrine of property considered as a trusteeship for God and for the poor; and, because it had this religious, as well as social and philanthropic character about it, it was, as we must presume, preceded by a celebration of the Holy Sacrament. Now St. Paul had heard of certain proceedings at the Love Feasts, which, in his judgment, involved those who took part in them, and who had also taken part in the Sacramental service that preceded them, in the guilt of profaning the Holy Sacrament which they had received immediately before. It appeared that, owing to causes which it is difficult at this day to determine positively, there was a great want of proper order and management at the Love Feast, so that it had

* Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, December 1st, being the First Sunday in Advent, 1889.

become, on certain occasions, little better than a general scramble for provisions. Some of the contributors to the common stock were anxious themselves to consume what they had themselves sent in; others to enjoy a good meal whoever might have provided it; and so one Christian might be seen, at these professed feasts of charity, making that most degraded of all exhibitions of himself which a human being can make by getting drunk, while his poorer brother could not succeed, in the scramble and confusion, in getting anything to eat or drink at all. "One," exclaims the astonished apostle, "one is hungry and another is drunken." If the Christians at Corinth could not do better than this, let them—so ruled the apostle—let them take their meals at home; let them not turn a feast that was designed to sustain, to express, to expand, the Christian love of man for man, into a public display of selfish animalism. Above all, let them fear to associate such conduct with the reception of the Holy Communion. They could not have thought steadily what their Communion, just before these excesses, had really meant. They could not have considered how, unless truly repented of, such excesses made another Communion out of the question. They had to remember, with regard to the Holy Sacrament, that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." They might—the apostle adds—they might see a token of God's judgments on this particular sin in the sickness, and in the deaths that had recently been so common in the Church at Corinth: "For this cause many are sickly among you, and many sleep." Before they presumed to approach the Holy Sacrament they should find out, by a serious effort, how they stood with God, and what

their sins, especially in this matter, had been : “ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.” If they would undertake this duty seriously they would escape the Divine judgments, which, as they might see, were already impending on them : “ If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged.”

The principle here laid down covers many other cases than that of the Corinthians, and other judgments of God than those temporal and physical afflictions with which the Corinthians had been visited. It asserts broadly that God’s judgments thus may be, at least in some degree, anticipated by ourselves, and that, if in judging ourselves we are thorough and sincere, we may escape the punishment that would else await us. Some punishment must follow all wrong doing if the moral government of the world is to go on at all, but it had better be here than elsewhere, better now than hereafter, better accepted willingly by the soul that judges itself than submitted to with reluctance and with terror when God arises to judgment. If the question be asked—“ How can a presumed criminal be his own judge ? ” the answer lies in the constitution of the human soul. Every man has within him a faculty which discharges by turns all the offices of a court of justice. Need I name Conscience ? Conscience arrests the criminal soul or self, and places it in the dock where it is to await its sentence. Conscience is the counsel for the prosecution. It collects the evidences of guilt, sets them out, weighs their value, marshals them in their separate and collective strength, urges the conclusion to which they point. But Conscience is also the counsel for the defence, although on this side of the court it stands by no means alone. It is assisted, often to its great embarrassment, by

three uninvited and very importunate junior counsel, who are very nearly related to each other, self-love, self-conceit, and self-assertion. But yet, even on the side of the defence, Conscience may sometimes have something honest and substantial to urge against the *prima facie* aspect of the case for the prosecution. And then, having concluded the case for the prosecution, and the case for the defendant, Conscience weighs out and balances the conflicting statements by a debate within itself, after the fashion of a jury, as though it had many voices but a single mind. And, once more, Conscience being thus warder and counsel on both sides, and jury, clothes itself at last in the higher majesty of justice, ascends the seat of judgment, and pronounces the sentence of the Divine law. And when that sentence is a sentence of condemnation, and has been clearly uttered within the soul, the soul knows no peace, until it has sought and found some certificate of pardon from the Supreme Authority which Conscience represents. Such is the process of self-judgment which the apostle urges so earnestly on his friends at Corinth. He would have them bring, by the agency of Conscience, their past acts and lives to the bar of Conscience, listen to all that could be urged on this side and on that, and then receive the sentence. If this were done sincerely, the misbehaviour at the Love Feasts, and other things more serious than that, which were going on at Corinth, would soon disappear, and there would be no cause for judgment at a higher tribunal: "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

Self-judgment, in the sense recommended by the apostle, is not as easy a proceeding as might at first sight appear. It has several obstacles, several enemies, to encounter, who

have long made themselves at home in human nature, who are certain to do their best to interfere with it, and of these the first is a want of entire sincerity. This involves a charge, the justice of which will always be disputed, but especially when it is made against the temper and dispositions of men of our own time, for probably if there is one thing on which we pride ourselves as characterising us, more than the generations who have preceded us, it is that we are the devotees of truth. We have done with the illusions of the past, with the illusions of ignorance, with the illusions of class-prejudice, with the illusions of superstition which obscured the mental sight of our forefathers. We are the very sons of truth. We have only one ambition—to see things as they are. Is not our enthusiasm, as a generation, for truth plain to any man who will only take the trouble to read our newspapers, or to attend our public meetings? What can be more admirable than our keenness of scent for a “job,” or for an impostor, for a public transaction that will not bear the light of day, for a public character who has only to be exposed in order to be distrusted? Might it not seem that we had taken as our own the old Homeric motto: “Let us have light, even though we perish in it,” so strong is this passion for truth, so seemingly noble, so far-reaching, so actively at work in all directions, whether of public or of private life around us? Yes, my friends, this anxiety to dissipate illusions around us for which we have no personal responsibility, but which would appear to inflict upon us something like a personal distress, is no doubt sufficiently noticeable; but is our passion for truth equally ardent in all directions? Is there not one quarter at least in which we shrink from indulging it? Is it not often the

case that while we are eager to know everything, even the worst, about public affairs and the affairs of our neighbours, about persons high in state, and about our humblest acquaintances, there is one person about which the great majority of us is often content to be very ignorant indeed? The eyes which see so clearly what is wrong elsewhere suddenly become dim when they turn their gaze within, the attention which is devoted so unremittingly to measuring and weighing the mote that is observable in another eye is suddenly exchanged for a listless apathy, or for an advised indifference as it might seem, when it is a question of considering the size and the weight of some beam that is nearer home. Our love of truth, it seems, if warm and intense, is not strictly universal in its field of operations, and the quarter in which its failure is most apparent is, unfortunately, that very quarter which it concerns each one of us most nearly to know all about that we possibly can.

And a second enemy to a true self-judgment is moral cowardice. Observe, I say *moral* cowardice—a very different thing from *physical*. Men who would shrink from nothing that involved exposure to personal bodily danger, and so an affair of the nerves, dare not look conscience steadily in the face. Physical courage, no doubt, is a great gift, but it is an attribute of the lion, and of many other animals besides, quite as much as of man. The man who could lead a storming party without a minute's hesitation is not always willing to meet his true self. As we look, you and I, on the surface of our characters, how fair they often seem; how like a flower garden, which the gentle courtesies of our friends, and our own self-approbation, have laboured together to lay out to the best advantage! But what if we disturb

the soil, and look a little beneath the surface? Our Divine Lord once referred to the tombs in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, the outer architectural forms of which, as they met the eye, in the rocks above the valley of Hinnom, and elsewhere, were so carved and painted as altogether to satisfy the sense of beauty in the passers by, while within, as He reminded His hearers, they were full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. That is from age to age too often as truly a figure of the human soul as it was of the then condition of the Pharisees, and to roll away the carved and painted stone from the door of that sepulchre, and to examine the contents of the chambers within, requires courage of a higher order than physical. If the truth must be told, are not a great many of us like those country folk who are afraid of crossing a churchyard path after nightfall lest they should see a ghost behind the tombstones? Our consciences are but cemeteries, in which dead memories are buried close to, or upon, each other in a forgotten confusion. It is so long since some of them were laid to rest that the inscriptions on their gravestones have already decayed. To traverse that cemetery, to encounter those spectres as, at the trumpet-call of a quickened conscience, they rise one by one to meet us will be made light of—I dare say it—by no living man, and will be a positive terror to many; certainly it requires moral courage. Some of you may have noticed an account of the conduct of a distinguished and learned Englishman who nearly lost his life in Egypt in the spring of the present year. He was travelling in order to prosecute his favourite studies, and was returning to his post on the Nile, after examining some antiquities in the neighbourhood, when he trod by chance on a cerastes, a snake of that species one of

which nineteen centuries ago ended the life of the fallen Cleopatra. When he felt that he had been bitten, and a moment's glance had shown him the deadly nature of the reptile, he lost not a moment in making his way to the boat, which was happily only a few yards distant. He called for a hot iron, which can generally be soon had on board, and then, with his own hands, he applied it to the wound, holding it there until he had burned out the poisoned flesh, down to the very bone. "Had you acted with less decision,"—so said a distinguished physician to him on his return to Cairo—"had you acted with less decision, your life must have been forfeited." In matters of conscience we, it seems, are less capable of heroism, though a great deal more is really at stake. We are, it may be, willing to put ourselves to some inconvenience, to expose ourselves to feeling some remorse, but we shrink from acute mental pain; we cannot probe the wounds of our souls to the quick, we must stop at a certain point and bandage it all up, and hope for the best. It is all natural enough, no doubt, but it is not so wise as it is undoubtedly natural. We cannot really get rid of fatal mischief by any half-measures. That which we shrink from extirpating will fester within our moral system, and in the end it will achieve its deadly victory. That judgment of self, which we shrink from instituting for ourselves now, will surely be held and be pronounced hereafter by a wisdom which we cannot dispute, by a strength which we cannot resist. "If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged."

And a third enemy to true self-judgment is the lack of perseverance. The apostle is not recommending a self-judgment which may be pronounced on one occasion only

and once for all. As we are constantly being tempted and often yielding more or less to temptation, we should be constantly bringing ourselves to the bar of conscience, which is the bar of God. Self-judgment should be life-long, unless we can presume at the close of our lives on an entire immunity from sin. It is no doubt often assumed by people that as they get older they will as a matter of course get better, but in fact this is by no means always the case. Many men as they grow older certainly grow worse; and, if this be so, the need for self-judgment, to say the least, does not diminish. But, unless we take care, the determination to persevere in being true with ourselves is likely to become weaker and more intermittent as our natural faculties decay with the progress of time. Much will take place within us which will never have been reviewed on this side of the grave. There have been sovereigns of earthly realms, such as the Roman Emperor Hadrian and the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, whose sense of the responsibilities of empire has been such as to impel them to do more than official duty would prescribe—to inspect their dominions and to visit their subjects, as far as they could personally, perhaps in disguise, and so to relieve distress and to encourage meritorious effort, and to correct injustice and to promote well-being and prosperity, and thus to strengthen the defences of the empire, and remove the motives to insurrection and disorder. And, if a man is, as a Christian should be, absolute ruler within and over his own soul and body, if his conscience, his true and best self, governs as well as reigns, if it does not hold its office merely at the good pleasure of a democracy of passions each of which is playing for its own end, and which collectively may proclaim a republic in the soul to-morrow morning, and

send their present ruler about his business—no doubt with a pension!—if, I say, a triumph of all the forces of moral disorder is not to take place within the human soul, its ruler must be constantly inspecting it, constantly judging it, that he may finish his royal course with joy, and arrest the stern judgment that must else await him by thus constantly anticipating it.

The motive for this self-judgment follows; we should not be judged if we would judge ourselves. Does this mean that a man who deals truly and severely with himself may always expect to escape human criticism? This is only very partially true. It is true, no doubt, that, so far as we judge ourselves in matters which affect our intercourse with others, endeavouring to bring that intercourse into strict accord with the principles and the terms of the law of Christ, we shall diminish the opportunities for hostile criticism on this score. A man who is severe upon himself every time that he ~~uses~~ his temper, is likely to lose his temper less and less frequently, and so to escape the judgment which other men always pass on those who do lose their tempers. A man who sincerely bewails and repents of, and punishes himself for, every statement that he knows himself to have made at variance with strict truth, will in time acquire a habit of adherence to truth, and will thus not be open to the judgments which men of the world pass on deflections from truth. A man who brings himself up for judgment to the bar of Conscience whenever he finds himself talking about others in a manner which is not consistent with the law of charity, is pretty certain as time goes on to observe that law in what he says more and more strictly, and as a consequence to escape the condemnatory judgments of others which are

naturally incurred by those who violate it. And there are other sins, such as theft and adultery, which human law is obliged to punish in the interests of society, and the man who strictly judges the incipient desires which lead up to these great crimes, does thereby escape the judgments which follow on their commission. In this sense self-judgment brings with it in this world its own reward. In whatever degree we cultivate by self-discipline the sincere, pure, humble, kindly, patient temper which is prescribed by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that degree we diminish the number of points of friction with our brother men in the struggle of our common life, and so we escape the judgment which such friction provokes.

But it does not follow that those who judge themselves most severely are thereby always excepted from the unfavourable judgments of other men ; for a very large number of men not only pass judgments on the words and acts of others of which they can take some sort of cognizance, but also, and strange to say with equal confidence, upon the motives and secret character of others which, from the nature of the case, they can have no real knowledge whatever. Added to which a large majority of men resent, perhaps almost unconsciously, a higher standard of life and conduct than their own. It is, they think, a tacit condemnation of their standard, and therefore they resent it as being in some sense pretentious and aggressive. They are bent on picking holes in those who profess it, and on making the worst of them that they can. Their thoughts have been put into words in a vivid passage of the Book of Wisdom. "The righteous," say they, "is not for our turn. He is clear contrary to our doings ; he was made to reprove our thoughts ; he is grievous unto us, even

to behold ; for his life is not like other men's ; his ways are of another fashion. Let us see if his words be true ; let us prove what shall happen in the end of him ; let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his weakness, and may prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a shameful death, for by his own saying he shall be respected." This is a dark side of human nature, but it is human nature none the less. When one of the greatest of the heathen set himself to consider what would happen if a really perfect man were to appear upon the earth, his decision was an unconscious prophecy. "Men," he said, "would put such a man to death." Men who are not themselves holy are impatient of holiness, and pass hard judgments, if they can do nothing more, on those who aim at it ; and thus it has happened that all the great servants of God, although judging themselves severely, have been again and again judged by their fellow-men with much greater severity. Where no sins are visible to the critic's eye, he will assert that there are secret sins, if they could only be discovered ; where nothing can be alleged in the way of infraction of one sort of law, another sort of law is appealed to or is invented in order to show that some law has been broken. "The presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault in him, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault in him ; then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning his God." So it has been with nearly all the finest characters in the Church of Christ. They have passed their lives constantly under a storm of calumny and insult, and only when they have left the world have they been

recognised as having been what they were. Nor is this wonderful in the case of those who, at their very best, only approach perfection, if it was also true in His case who alone was perfect. "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of the household?" He, the King of saints, made His home in a world of sinners, and He did not withdraw Himself from the harsh judgments of men. He knew that these judgments have their provoking cause, not in the facts of human life, but in the secret and lasting irritation of the human heart. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and ye say he hath a devil; the Son of man is come eating and drinking, and ye say behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." A man then who judges himself severely cannot on that account expect to disarm human judgment, but he may do much more—he may anticipate, and by anticipating he may arrest the judgment of God; for the judgments of God light not on all sinners, but only on unrepentant sinners, and self-judgment is the effect and the expression of penitence, it is the effort of the soul to be true to the highest law of its own being, which is also the law of its Creator. All true repentance involves self-judgment, placing Conscience on its rightful throne at the centre of the soul, the bringing before its tribunal the guilty past so far as memory can possibly recover it, the recognition of the guilt in the clear light of the awful and eternal law, the law of righteousness. Even within the soul the judgment is set and the books are opened, and the justice of God is vindicated and, such is His mercy, it is disarmed.

It will perhaps be said: "Does not all this leave out of account the one sacrifice for sin, the one Name through whom

alone man is reconciled to God and God to man? Is not this self-judgment an attempt on man's part to work out an atonement for himself without the aid and agency of the great Atoner?" That this is not really the case we might be sure when we reflect that the apostle who more than any other writer in the New Testament insists on the need and the power of our Lord's atonement for sin is the same apostle who bids us judge ourselves if we would not be judged. Self-judgment, if it be thorough and sincere, so far from leading us to think that we can do without the one propitiation for sin made for us upon the Cross by our Lord Jesus Christ, ought to deepen in us the sense of our utter need of it. Self-judgment shows us what we are; it does not of itself enable us to become other than we are; it does not of itself confer pardon for the past or strength to do better in the time to come. It bids us look out of and beyond ourselves to a divine compassion which is also divine justice, which, if we will, we can, by that complete and whole-hearted adhesion of the soul to truth which the Bible calls "faith," make in reality and for ever our own. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

That self-judgment both bids and enables us thus to look above and beyond ourselves for help, is especially apparent in the new force and life which it gives to prayer. It makes a man pray at once more intelligently and more earnestly; more intelligently because when he has had himself up for strict judicial investigation at the bar of his conscience, he knows what he needs, not in a vague, general way, but in detail and precisely. Instead of complaining to God in general terms

of the corruption of his fallen nature—a complaint which makes him in his own estimate no worse than any and all his neighbours—he lays his finger upon certain acts of evil which he, and he only, so far as he knows, has committed. Instead of saying only in vague terms that he has erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep, he knows the times at which, and the places in which, and the acts and the words by which, this erring and straying have taken place. The general language of the Church, which is all that is possible for a large mixed congregation confessing sins in unison, is illuminated by the individual conscience of the man who has judged himself with a meaning that is all his own. He knows when he has failed, and why; he knows what temptations have overpowered him, and when and how; he knows by fatal experience what sides of his character are most open to the assaults of the enemy, and the circumstances in which he may most easily be taken at a disadvantage. And this special knowledge gives to his prayer reality and force. He does not pray as a man who is using old language in a conventional and half-hearted way; he prays, not from a sense of propriety, but as a man who knows the perils from which he would escape, knows the dangers which encompass him, knows the weaknesses and the propensities which momentarily embarrass him; he prays as for his life; and when his prayer issues in victory he understands what he owes to having judged himself honestly, and how, having judged himself, he will not, through God's mercy, be judged as an unrepentant sinner at the last.

Surely this is a practical lesson for Advent Sunday, and, if the question be asked how the apostle's advice can best be reduced to a practical form, the answer is: by our resolving

to-day to begin, if we have not yet begun, the daily practice of examination of conscience, whether immediately before lying down to rest or at some earlier hour when the faculties of the mind are more entirely on the alert, but certainly at some time within each twenty-four hours. Such an examination should take place in every Christian life. A short prayer for the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit, a rapid review of the places, persons, duties, actions, words amidst which and in which the day has been passed, a careful record—better if it be put down on paper—of any deliberate sin against the known will and law of God, and then one earnest prayer for pardon through the precious blood and prevailing intercession of the Immaculate Lamb—this is self-examination in a Christian life. It takes some little time—at first, perhaps, nearly a quarter of an hour—but we soon learn to read our conscience at a glance like the face of a clock, and five minutes amply suffices. It makes no great difference, we may think, at the end of a single day whether we have performed this duty or not, but at the end of a week, if we keep a look-out upon ourselves, we shall see that it has made a considerable difference, and at the end of a year a difference so great that it cannot well be described in words. This daily, nightly rehearsal within the soul for that last tremendous scene of all which awaits us all and each, familiarises us with it in some sense by repeated anticipation; goes far to robbing it of its awful strangeness; nerves us to look upon the face of the Judge on the throne of heaven by thus constantly looking on the face of the judge on the throne of conscience; and when, at the last, the skies shall open and the Son of man shall appear surrounded by His holy angels, prepared to exact of each and all an account of things done in the body,

happy, oh, happy will they be who have already thus sought the ground of their hearts, proved and examined their thoughts, obtained His pardon for that which, while it is unforgiven, He must condemn, and so, having truly judged themselves during the days of their earthly pilgrimage, are only summoned at the last to judgment, that they may receive His gracious acquittal and His bright welcome to their eternal home.

FIERY TRIAL.*

“The fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”—I COR. iii. 13.

PROBABLY nothing in their ministerial careers was more unwelcome to the apostles of Christ—St. Peter and St. Paul, and to their fellow-worker Apollos—than the use which was made of their names by some officious friends at Corinth. The apostles were represented by these busy people as heads of parties in the Corinthian Church. Their names were bandied as labels of rival doctrines. Each eager disputant undertook to explain the real mind of his chosen master, and to extenuate and to intensify incipient differences by explanation. Even the holiest name of all was dragged into the conflict as though it represented, not the one including unchanging truth, but some particular variety of Christianity. “Everyone of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” It was true, no doubt, that the first preachers of the faith laid stress in their public teaching upon different aspects or elements of the one faith which they preached. Cephas or St. Peter would naturally represent the Gospel as the outcome or fulfilment of the Jewish dispensation; St. Paul as the enjoyment of the relation of a sonship with God offered to all the races of mankind through union with His only begotten Son, and its consequent claims to be a world-

* Preached in St. Paul’s Cathedral, on Sunday, December 15th, 1889.

wide or catholic, and not merely a national religion ; while Apollos would call attention to the common limits between the Gospel and the thought and character of the Greek and Alexandrian world, to which he had devoted much of his earlier life. These several phases or forms of religious teaching are by no means incompatible with each other ; a value for the past may easily go hand in hand with joy in spiritual freedom and with appreciation of the resources of modern learning and research, and St. Paul was no more opposed to St. Peter on the one ground than Cephas to Apollos on the other. But the Corinthians of the day did not see far enough to understand this. For centuries the Greeks had connected each tenet, nay, almost each method of teaching philosophy with some prominent name, and when they were converted to Christianity they carried this habit into the Church of Christ, in which there is only one Master of truth whilst all others are His disciples, even though they may be engaged in setting forth now one and now another element or aspect of His infallible teaching. And thus it happened that in spite of the feelings of those most concerned, their pupils formed round their names at Corinth separated and hostile groups, attributing to them the advocacy of even incompatible gospels, and so the Church of Christ at Corinth had come to present the appearance of a collection of hostile sects within a single diocesan enclosure ; attended by all the unwelcome symptoms of rivalry, ill-feeling, and incessant gossip, which such a state of things implies. Now, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul takes little or no notice of the presumed rivalry between himself and St. Peter. He addresses himself to the adherents of Apollos ; he compares his work with that of Apollos by means of two metaphors.

The first is taken from husbandry ; he and Apollos are two labourers in the garden of the Lord at Corinth ; he had planted the seeds of truth, Apollos had watered them ; he had taught

the Corinthians simply to believe in Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified, risen, interceding; and then Apollos had come on the scene to answer the questions which the faith thus presented suggested to a quick-witted Greek people. His teaching certainly differed to a certain extent in the ground it covered, and still more in its method, from that of Apollos; but there was ample room for both of them. They were not merely in harmony with, they were supplemental to, each other, and the real agent in the work of building up living Christian convictions was distinct from both of them. "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth but God that giveth the increase; now he that planteth and he that watereth are all one." This metaphor of husbandry did not, however, suggest the full truth. It taught that all true spiritual growth is the work of God's grace, and that husbandmen whose occupations were very different, were both working for a single end. But it left no room for the fact, that since God's instruments are men, they are apt to deposit along with the precious material which comes from God, more or less material of another kind which is their own, and which is not more precious or more enduring than other things of purely human origin.

This last truth ought to be taught by another metaphor which recognises that the Christian faith and life in the soul is not only a growth, but also in certain cases an erection or edifice, at which human hands toil and to which human materials contribute something. But a spiritual building can have only one foundation, if it is to be Christian at all, it must be based on the Lord Jesus Christ; but on that one foundation edifices of more kinds than one, so the Apostle implies, may possibly be erected in different souls—yea, he wrote to his Corinthian friends: "Ye are not only God's husbandry"—or, more correctly, "God's tilled ground"—"ye are God's building. According to the grace of God,

which is given unto me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon." And then, in an altered tone of significant warning, he adds: "Let each man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

Many of us who live in London have sometimes watched that fascinating, but awful, sight—the progress of a great fire. We have marked how the devouring element masters first one and then another department of the building which is its victim; but especially we have noted what it consumes and what it is forced to spare, the resistless force with which it sweeps through and shrivels up all the slighter materials, and only pauses before the solid barriers of stone or iron, thus trying before our eyes the builders' work of what sort it is.

Now, of whom was the Apostle thinking when he wrote the warning words about the spiritual builder who employed wood, and hay, and stubble in his work? Not, we may be sure, of Apollos himself, for when St. Paul wrote these words Apollos was at his side at Ephesus, and, so far as we know, on terms with him of perfect friendship and confidence, and only once in his later writings does the Apostle refer to him, and the terms in which he does so—it is in his Epistle to Titus—forbade the idea that there could have been any such failure in his work as a Christian teacher as the words before us would imply. But it is very possible that the eager adherents of Apollos had deserved the apostolical censure which is conveyed by the words. They had been powerfully impressed by the brilliant Alexandrian, by his knowledge of what was being said and thought in the Greek world; by his skill in setting out what he had to say to the very best advantage; they were, after the manner of the disciples, more

eager to imitate their master's methods than careful to be true to the end he had in view. And so it would seem likely that St. Paul had those or some of them in his eye throughout those striking paragraphs in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he treats of the Gospel as the true philosophy or wisdom of God, the wisdom which set forth Jesus Christ crucified as a remedy for the sins and sorrows and errors of mankind, in contrast to the wisdom or philosophy of this world, which had no end beyond the poor, thin, and vapid self-saving creed of its originators and promoters. That some of these younger Apollonists, so to call them, should in their teaching have mixed up hay and wood and stubble with more precious things is probable enough. No doubt, they, too, taught the heathen who sought from them light and guidance the supreme, the eternal truths, the unity of the attributes of God, the Incarnation, the death and the resurrection of the Eternal Son, the unapproached perfection of His human life, the atoning value of His passion, the new life which, by the agency of His Spirit, He communicates through appointed channels to the souls of men; no doubt they, too, insisted on the awful issues of existence, on the solemn meaning of probation, or that which lies beyond the grave for man's endless weal or woe; but mingled with these truths were other matters not subsidiary to them, not illustrating their meaning, but inserted like fragments of a foreign body to which, in reality, they did belong, scraps of purely heathen thought, tag-ends of pagan epigrams, speculations which might lead anywhither else, but which did not lead to Bethlehem and Calvary. The Apollonist view of the old literature and religion of the Greeks, applied, at any rate, within limits, to the sacred books of the Hebrews; questions such as How are the dead raised up? asked only to provoke discussion, and without any expectation that an answer was possible, that old motley jingle, produced in the mind of the Christian disciple, it may be at the outset a sense of excitement and

amazement, but in the result surely lasting bewilderment and uncertainty, which would be ill able to cope with the trials that awaited him, "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." That was the note of solemn warning which the apostle sounded. "Take care," he seems to say to the young men who are trading on the great name and authority of Apollos—"take care what you are doing with those souls at Corinth. Are you only interesting and amusing them for a few of the passing days of time, or are you building up in them a faith which will enable them to pass death and eternity? What are the materials of the structures within those souls which you are raising? Are they the gold, the silver, the precious stones of the apostolic faith? No doubt they are; but do they not also include materials of a different kind—less valuable, less durable—wood, hay, and stubble? If this be so, a time is coming when all the precious and worthless alike will be submitted to a serious test. "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

What was this fire? The apostle had told us that he was thinking chiefly of the day of Christ's appearing. "The day shall declare it because it shall be revealed in fire," or, as he writes to the Thessalonians, "The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire." The apostle then is not here thinking of any fire which will outlast the judgment, such as the fire of hell, nor yet of any that will precede the judgment; it is the fire that will environ the Judge, in which He will be manifested, a fire which will search and probe every man's work, testing its inmost quality, playing harmlessly around all that is solid and enduring, but withering up into a thin cinder all that is frivolous and unsubstantial. This is, no doubt, the apostle's meaning. But He who at the end will judge us once for all is now and always judging us, and His perpetual presence among us as our Judge, constantly probing, trying, saving us, is revealed by events and circumstances which have on our souls the effect of fire—they

burn up that which is worthless, they leave that which is solid unscathed. There are many events and situations which act on us in this way ; it will be enough to consider one or two of them.

There is the searching, testing power of a new and responsible position, of a situation forcing its occupant to make a critical choice, or to withstand a strong pressure. Such a new position discovers and burns up all that is weak in a man's faith and character. In quiet times there is nothing to extort from him this discovery, but when a great effort of action and of resistance becomes necessary, it is soon seen what will and what will not stand the test ; all that looks like holding on the solid principle, which is in reality only fancy and sentiment and speculation, is then seen to be unserviceable, and if a man's religious and moral mind is mainly composed of such materials as this a catastrophe is inevitable. Sometimes, indeed, men do surprise us when placed in a difficult position, by the sudden exhibition of energies for which no one before had given them credit. The apparently thoughtless show foresight, the timid courage, the selfish disinterestedness, and the irresolute perseverance, of which there had been no evidence before ; the quiet schoolboy in an Italian village, whom his companions named the "Dumb Ox," becomes almost in spite of himself the first of the schoolmen, one of the small number of the greatest thinkers in the world. The officer who has been distinguished for nothing but a punctual regard to duty is suddenly placed in a position to show that he has the genius and the courage, or almost the genius and the courage sufficient to roll back the course of history and to save from ruin a falling empire. The youth whose life has been passed amidst scenes of frivolity, and, it may be, of licentiousness, hears one day an appeal to his conscience, to his sense of duty, to his sense of failure, and he awakes from a dream of sensual lethargy to show the world that he has in him the making of a man—aye, the making of a saint. These, as you know, are not imaginary

pictures, but the Greeks had a stern proverb to the effect that a position of leadership shows what a man is, and the real drift of that saying was that in practice it shows too often what he is not. It implies that generally a pending discovery will be unfavourable, that the test of high office would in the majority of cases bring to light something that is weak and rotten in the character which in private life might have escaped detection. History is strewn with illustrations of this truth. The virtuous, though weak, emperor, who was floated to power on the surf of revolution, is by no means the only man of whom it might be said that all would have judged him capable of ruling others if only he had never been a ruler. How often does early manhood open with so much that seems promising—with intelligence, courage, attention to duty, unselfishness, what looks like high principle—and then the man is put into a position of authority—it is the fire that tests the work which he has done in his character. Suddenly he betrays some one defect which ruins everything: it may be vanity, it may be envy, it may be a shadow of untruthfulness, it may be some lower fierce passion which emerges suddenly as if unbidden from the depths of the soul, and wins over him a fatal mastery. All his good is turned to ill, all is distorted, discoloured; he might have died a young man amid general lamentations that so promising a life had been cut short. He does die as did Nero or Henry Tudor, amid the loudly-expressed or the muttered thanksgiving of his generation, that he has left the world. The fact was, that the position in which he found himself exposed him to a pressure which his character could not bear. You remember how the old Tay Bridge, before that fatal winter night, was believed to be equal to its purpose. No one of us who travelled by it once and again, high in the air, over what was practically an arm of the sea, thought that it would not do its work for many a long year, and in all winds and weathers. It needed, no doubt, a mighty impact, a terrific rush of wind from one

particular quarter, in order to show that the genius and audacity of men had presumed too largely on the forbearance of the elements. But the moment came. We many of us must remember something of the sense of horror which the tragical catastrophe left on the public mind; the gradual disappearing of the last train as it moved on its wonted way on into darkness, the suddenly observed dislocation and flickering of the distant lights, the faint sound as of a crash rising for a moment even over the din of the storm, and then the utter darkness as all, train and bridge, together sank into the gulf of waters beneath, and one moment of supreme and unimaginable agony was followed by the silence of death.

And so it has been more than once in the moral world, and the apostle foresaw that some of the Christians in Corinth, who were mingling in the spiritual building within them, along with the gold and silver and precious stones of the apostolic faith, the baser and less worthy materials, might illustrate as time went on what it is to have one's work tried, even in this world, not merely by a tempest, but by fire—a fire that should indeed discover of what sort it is. Within the last few years an able writer has disinterred from the uncertainties and the legends which had hitherto surrounded the subject, and has given to the world in what we may say is something like its historical completeness, the history of the persecutions of the early Christian Church. In that history the failures of the persecuted Christians are far more tragical than their sufferings; their sufferings meant victory, their escape from suffering meant defeat. Not seldom did it happen that the Christian who had not made sure of his creed when measuring the trials which awaited him, quailed at the decisive moment, surrendered the sacred books in the presence of his pastor, or his bishop, and offered the pinch of incense with the idolaters to the genius of the emperor. To all seeming that man might have lived and died in quiet times as a faithful servant of Christ. The position of prominence,

which in his easy self-confidence he had courted, betrayed a fatal weakness, and he heard in his conscience, as he bent in homage before the heathen tribunal, those awful words: "Whosoever shall deny Me before men him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." And we see these truths at work in associated as well as in individual human life. Any one will recall the names of empires which have appeared to possess the elements of unconquerable strength until they have been subjected to the test of new conditions—the empire of the Great Alexander, the empire of Attila the Hun, the empire of the first Napoleon. Alexander subdued all the nations which spread from the Adriatic to the Indies. No sooner had he passed away than the unity of his work was shattered by the ambition of three generals. Attila's kingdom at one time reached from the Volga to the Loire; the vast host at his disposal was attended by a bevy of subject kings and chiefs; the emperors of the East and West were both his obsequious tributaries; and the men of his day expressed the terror which his apparently boundless power inspired when they named him "the scourge of God." Yet he had scarcely been discovered dead on his couch after a drunken revel when his sons, greedling for high place, turned their arms against each other, and so within some fifteen years the Huns had sunk to be the dependents and tributaries of the very race which but now they had ruled. And there is Attila's great counterpart in modern Europe—Napoleon. His vast motley hosts swept along over much the same ground as Attila's, though in an opposite direction. Like Attila's, they passed over ancient and prostrate thrones; like his, too, they went on the errand of an insatiable ambition: but before he died, as we all know, Napoleon's work had been tested with a severity which revealed its weakness, and left behind it nothing but a million of tombs and the dying echoes of a vast catastrophe.

And as with States, so with Churches—with particular

branches, that is, of the Christian Church, though not with the Church universal, which has the promise of indefectibility: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." A Church may be, to all appearances, highly favoured; it may have leaders conspicuous for holiness or learning; it may reckon its multitudes of devout communicants, its flourishing missions at home and abroad, and its many works of benevolence and mercy; and yet it may have admitted to its bosom some false principles, whether of faith or morals, which will find it out in the day of trial. There is one solemn instance of this—one, at least, in Christian antiquity. In the early centuries no Church was more highly favoured than that of Northern Africa. Among its teachers were names as great as—one greater than—any in post-apostolic Christendom—Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine. It had, it is said, almost innumerable churches which produced saints and martyrs; its intellectual and practical activity was tested by the long series of Councils of Carthage; it was the first Church, so far as we know, certainly it was earlier than any in Italy, to translate the New Testament Scriptures into the language of the West; it held its own in debate with the greatest Churches of Europe, and with Rome itself; but the day of trial came on it with the invasion of the Vandals, as Augustine lay dying in Hippo. It came again, and more decisively, with the Moslem conquest. There are Churches in the East which have suffered as much as or more than the Church of Northern Africa—Churches which have never ceased suffering, yet which in their weakness are still instinct with life and hope; but the Church of Cyprian and Augustine perished outright. We may guess at the cause—we cannot determine; it may have been a general lax morality among its people; it may have been a widespread spirit of paradox among its teachers; it may have been some far-reaching weakness or corruption which the day of account will alone reveal. But there is the fact. No church in primitive Christendom stood higher than the Church of Africa;

none has ever so utterly disappeared. Let us of the Church of to-day, of the Church of England, be not high-minded, but fear, for if prominence and success do not discover what is weak in faith and character, there is an agent who comes to all sooner or later, and who will surely do so—there is the fire, the searching testing power of deep affliction. Many a creed that will do for the sunny days of life will not serve us in its deep shadows, much less in the valley of the shadow of death. In those great troubles which shake the soul to its depth, and which force it to ask itself, “What is really solid enough not to fail?” all withers away that does not rest either immediately or by necessary inference on Divine authority. The truths which strengthen and brace character, and enable it to pass unscathed like the three holy children through the fiery furnace of deep sorrow, are the great certainties which were ever to the front in the apostle’s teaching about God and men, about life and death, about sin and redemption, about nature and grace, and, above all, about the boundless power and love of Jesus Christ our Lord and God. These solemn realities will stand us in good stead whatever the sorrows of life may be, and in that great day, of which Advent reminds us, when we shall be seen as we are, when no secret defect will escape exposure, when no indulgence will be extended to moral rottenness only because it is found where all around is unsound and fair. “I will search Jerusalem with candles” is a saying which will be fulfilled at that day as never before. “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I say unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me.”

This day week some hundreds of young men will be ordained, not in this Church and country only, but all over Christendom, as ministers of Christ; and during the preceding days and especially in the three Ember days—

Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday—we are all invited to remember them in our prayers, and to win, if we may, for some of them some of the strength and gifts which they so greatly need. It is an exceptionally anxious time for those who are about to give their lives to this most blessed yet most serious of all employment—anxious not so much on account of political or social forecast as in view of the state of mind of large numbers of men and women in this and other countries on the most important of all subjects. It is idle to disguise from ourselves that many are altogether estranged from the Christian faith, not a few of whom might by natural bearing and disposition be fitted to be its attached children, while many more who have not rejected it live in a state of continuous unsettlement and uncertainty. And, meanwhile, as is natural in such circumstances, the moral evils which the Church of Christ was especially designed to encounter and to vanquish crowd around us in new and more formidable and threatening forms. But this darker side of the picture is compensated for by the fact that at least in its history rarely, if ever, has interest in religion been so widespread and so general as it is now; rarely, if ever, has it been so easy to obtain a hearing for religious truth. It might seem as though, amid all the bewilderment and uncertainty of many minds around us, there was a quickened sense of the immense significance of life in itself, and of what are felt to be, at any rate, even by those who believe least, its possible issues. If the great apostle were here, surely he would exclaim, as of old, when writing from Ephesus to his children at Corinth, “A great door and effectual is opened unto me.” Let us pray that the young recruits for the ministerial army of the Great Captain of our salvation may know how to meet their difficulties, and how to use their opportunities; that they may build up each of them—first in his own soul and then in the souls of those of the coming generation—the gold and silver and precious stones of the unchanging faith, without the wood

and hay and stubble that might fatally imperil the building, that at the last great day they and their flocks may be owned by Him whose mighty love is indeed the revelation of the essential life of God, but whose eyes withal are as a flame of fire, and out of whose mouth there goeth a sharp two-edged sword.

RESURRECTION HOPES.*

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”—I PETER i. 3.

ST. PETER addresses his epistle, not as St. Paul's manner is, to some particular church, but to Christians scattered over the wide extent of territory throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, that is Asia Minor, and Bithynia. It is true that these districts join on to each other; that they are all confined between the Black Sea and the Gulf of Cyprus; and that at the present day the cruel yoke of the Turk has in the course of four centuries and a half, probably, reduced them to a dead level of barbarism, which has buried beneath its ruin the sharp provincial distinctions which existed in antiquity. But when St. Peter wrote, the Roman rule was established through all the districts referred to. Yet, the Roman empire was still young, and the Roman rule was wisely tolerant of provincial characteristics; and, as a consequence, the people to whom St. Peter wrote differed not less widely, to say the least, than do the inhabitants of the various states of Europe differ from each other in the present day. Doubtless the strangers would have been mainly, although not exclusively, converts from Judaism. Of these converts St. Peter had particular care, after the division of labour between the leading apostles, which St. Paul mentions in writing to the Galatians. They

* Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, Sunday afternoon, April 7th, 1872.

would have had for the most part the blood of Abraham in their veins. Yet, notwithstanding the sense of a common descent, which, since their conversion, had lost its specific religious value, they would have shared in many respects the divergent provincial sympathies of the populations around them. They would have been parted from one another by different customs, by different walks in life, by different commercial interests, in not a few cases by differences of dialect and language, by different relations with the various local governments, by very different ideas, indeed, upon a great many subjects which form the staple of interest in ordinary life. But as St. Peter thought over these scattered strangers, with all their manifold divergences from each other, he felt that they had one thing in common. They were, as he puts it, sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And this implied much beyond. It meant that the horizons of their various lives were enormously enlarged, and in one direction; that they were, amid all their differences, living not for themselves merely, but for a world beyond it. And so St. Peter bursts forth into a hymn of praise, for such indeed it is, a hymn which the fertile and pathetic genius of a great musician has made familiar to the worshippers at this and at most English cathedrals, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, prepared in heaven for you."

To the question, What has the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead done for us Christians? a great many answers may be given.

Of these, perhaps, the answer which is of the first importance, the first answer which Christ's own apostles would have given, is this, that by rising from the dead Jesus Christ proved that He had a right to speak about God; about the old

religion of His countrymen ; about the religious conduct of the most influential classes among His countrymen ; above all, about Himself as He had spoken. When He was asked to give a sign, that is a something which might be accepted as evidence of the commission which He had from heaven, He gave this ; He said, that just as the old prophet Jonah had been buried out of sight in the whale, and yet been restored to his ministry and to his countrymen, so He Himself, stricken beneath the passion and violence of death, would be laid in the darkness of the tomb in the very heart of the earth, and yet would at a given time burst the fetters of the grave, would rise again. And, accordingly, when these predictions had been actually realised, the fact was appealed to, as we see from the Acts of the Apostles, by the earliest preachers of Christianity in almost every single sermon. It was a fact which evidently did their work in the way of compelling men to listen to what they had to say about their Lord, and so to making faith in Him at least easy, better than any other topic they had to urge. St. Paul, to add one illustration, begins his great Epistle to the Romans by simply saying that Jesus had been declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

But the resurrection has done other things for us besides this. It is a great evidential achievement ; and upon one of these results of it I desire to dwell this afternoon. It has endowed Christians who treat it as a serious matter of fact with the grace, the great grace of hope. St. Peter feels the preciousness of this when he exclaims that God the Father of our Lord is blessed, if only on this account, that from His abundant mercy He has begotten men to a lively hope by his Son's resurrection from the dead.

It is a truism to say it—but as truisms are apt to be more lost sight of than paradoxes from their very obviousness, it is a truism which will bear repeating—it is a truism to say that we cannot get on without hope. Hope is not, as the proverb

has said, merely the salt, it is the very sinew of man's life. Explain it as we may, there is no doubt about the fact that the human mind must, to a great extent, live in and for the future. The brute, indeed, is content with the present. The brute feeds, he fights, he gambols, he sleeps, he makes the most of each successive sensation, because his attention is not diverted from it by any forecasts about a coming time; he apprehends nothing until the experience of his senses, appealing to a faint faculty of association which he undoubtedly possesses, forces the apprehended danger or pleasure right in upon him. He has no view or theory of his life, of his place in creation, of his relation to other living creatures about him, of his capacity for and title to a coming destiny of any kind. And, herein, the brute differs from man, because man is so little content with and occupied or exhausted by the thoughts, the sensations, the interests of the present moment, that he cannot but look forward whether to a nearer or a more remote future. His capacity for excellence is exactly proportioned to his power of throwing himself onward into a future which is yet beyond his reach, and which may even be always beyond it.

Now this truth holds good whether we look at man as an individual, or as a member of society. What is the real object, the highest effort of any real education? Is it merely the teaching a boy so much reading and arithmetic, so much history and geography, so much natural science and humane literature, so much of political or mathematical truth? No, it is much more than this. The great object of a wise educator is to set before the boy whom he is teaching some future to which he may aspire, and which may fire his best enthusiasms; some future which may supply him with a strong motive for making the most of his present opportunities; some future upon which, during the drudgery and toil of his earlier tasks, his eye may rest, and which may be in a word the object of his hope. It is, of course, a difficult and a very delicate thing to

do this without developing in the boy the vice of a purely selfish ambition. But the thing can be done, and if education is to be vigorous and thorough, it must be done. What becomes of a boy whose every lesson, every exercise, every effort to remember, to understand, to think, to compose, is strictly without an object, and is only an isolated and sterile labour, having no end beyond itself, or at best none beyond the consequences of neglecting it? And does not the same rule hold good in later life? The boy in time becomes a man. He is the father of a family; he transfers to his children some of the hope which he cherished once for himself; he thinks less of what they are than of what it is probable they will be a few years hence. He thinks over their characters, their tastes, their dispositions, the evidence they have given of fitness for a particular work in life. He enters into a calculation of probabilities, he tries to picture to himself their various positions and occupations in later years. So strong, sometimes, so penetrating is this his sympathy, that in them, as men have said, he lives in his own boyhood over again; only, as it must be, with the larger experience, with the wider horizon, of his manhood. He may—God only knows—he may be destined to a terrible disappointment. But, then, this is his strength, he lives in hope. It is this hope which enables him to work hard for his children, to deny himself lawful enjoyments for his children, to put up cheerfully with ingratitude, with worrying, with dulness or perversity in these, the objects of his strongest affections, in a manner which, in any other case, would be impossible. Nor is this less true of a man's specific work in life. Hope is ever the motive principle of the exertions which command success. The statesman, the artist, the man of letters, the great chemist, the great engineer, all, as a matter of course, look forward. Minds of the lower type look forward to the reputation which will be won by success. Minds of a higher order look forward to the happiness of doing some work, some

little work for God, by doing some real service to their generation, or to posterity ; and it is this hope which sustains them under all the discouragements of weak health, of unfriendly criticism, of unfruitful efforts to mould intractable materials, of conscious present inability to compass, to express, in fact, the ideal of excellence which has floated before their mind's eye, and which originally roused them to exertion.

Nor is hope less essential to association of men than to man in his individual capacity. An institution, a society, a nation which has no future in its eye, is already doomed. It may still exist, but its life, its moral life, is a thing of the past. An army is never thoroughly demoralised until the hope of victory is quite gone. A nation is not ruined until it has reached a point at which it remarks that it can make out for itself no prospect of expansion, development, progress in coming years ; a point at which it turns regretfully in upon itself, confesses to itself that it has exhausted its destiny, and has only to wait the onset from without, or the collapse from within, which will seal the doom of which it has already felt the terrible presentiment.

And, as hope is thus necessary to the temporal well-being of societies of men, and of individual man, so is it above all things essential to the highest well-being of man as man. The hope upon which states, institutions, artists, painters, military men, politicians rest, is directed to objects within the sphere of sense and time. But man as man—man in his deepest self—must look beyond sense and time. For man is confronted everywhere with the barrier which arrests or which dissolves all human hopes ; he is confronted with death. Does all really end with death ? That is *the* question of questions—the greatest question that confronts man when he sets himself to think seriously about his place in the universe, about his real being, about what we call his destiny. It is impossible to put off permanently the consideration of this question,

which rises up to life whenever there is a resurrection within any human mind of serious thought. It is as fresh, it is as interesting, it is as full of unspeakable, of unparalleled importance for this generation as it was for the last. It will be just as much so for the next generation as it is for this. Science does not solve that question. A materialist civilisation cannot; it would bury it out of sight. Time does not tell upon it. There it is; that question of questions for each and for all of us, Whither am I going? "What are you going to do?" said an elderly friend to a young man who was just entering upon life. "I hope," was the answer, "to complete my education at the university." "And what then?" "I shall learn a profession, and I shall devote myself to it." "And what then?" "I shall marry as soon as I can afford it." "And what then?" "No doubt, then, I shall have enough to do in educating and providing for my family." "And what then?" "Well, of course, in time I shall get to be an old man." "And what then?" asked his persevering questioner. "In time, I suppose,—well, I suppose I shall die." "And what then?" There was silence,—the young man had never looked so far ahead as that.

My brethren, man needs an answer to that question, if the deepest springs of his being are to be really reached. And if we cast our eyes upon the forms of opinion which lie outside the Christian Church, what do we find? There is, of course, the materialist answer that all does end with death, that man's higher being is but the vitality of his animal frame, but that it perishes with it—perishes utterly and for ever. But this answer does not really satisfy man; it does not satisfy any man in his best and most thoughtful moods. Why should men be haunted, possessed as they are by the idea—the instinct of some coming immortality! Why should this idea be so general, so importunate, as upon the whole it undoubtedly is? If the philosopher Descartes was right in arguing that the world-wide idea of God in the soul of man could only be

explained by the fact of God's existence, is it not equally reasonable to argue that the idea of immortality, which is so general, arises equally from the fact of our immortality as human beings? Because, how else are we to explain the prevalence of this idea? Why should such a hope, such an apprehension, such a presentiment—call it what you will—of an existence after death be as deep, as almost universal as it is? A superstition, which has no basis in fact, has its limits in time and in territorial sway. But wherever man has risen above the lower stages of an animalised life, the idea of a future, in some instinctive way at least, has dawned upon him, if only as a correlative to the idea of God. As our own Addison makes Cato say in his soliloquy :

“ It must be so. Plato, thou reasonest well ;
 Else, whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
 This longing after immortality ?
 Or, whence this secret dread and inward horror
 Of falling into nought ? Why shrinks the soul
 Back on herself, and startles at destruction ?
 'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us ;
 'Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
 And intimates eternity to man.”

Now, this general impression or instinct of immortality has been taken to pieces. It has been traced, sometimes to the idea that the soul is of itself indestructible, as being a simple or uncompounded essence. Sometimes, as by the great German writer Goethe, to the profound conviction that mental and moral activity, which has lasted up to the very moment of dissolution, cannot be arrested by the death of man's outward husk, and must continue in some other form and sphere beyond it. Sometimes, to the sense of justice which refuses to believe that a moral governor of the world will not provide a future in which to redress the terrible inequalities of the present state of being. But, so long as these convictions do not rest upon some fact which is independent of our minds

of all our varying and shifting moods of thought and feeling, whatever may be their intellectual value—and I would not for one instant be understood to disparage it—they are not, as a matter of fact, strong enough to govern conduct, to restrain passion, to invigorate the sense of duty, to make men embark in serious ventures on the strength of them. And for this reason they are only found in the old Pagan, or in the modern non-Christian world, in any tolerable degree of distinctness among the cultivated classes. They never have influenced the great mass of persons, or, when they have done so, they have upon the whole produced that depressed view of life of which we find traces in the literature which abounded in parts of Europe, simultaneously with the great outbreak of infidel opinion at the close of the last century. Life, it was thought, was a failure. To have lived was upon the whole a misfortune. Moral apathy was in reality common sense. Moral or spiritual enthusiasm was an abject fanaticism. Over such a generation as that the Psalmist's sentence might, indeed, be written—"They lie in the hell like sheep; death gnaweth upon them, and the righteous shall have domination over them in the morning: their beauty shall consume in the sepulchre out of their dwelling." No man who has not a clear belief in a future life can have permanently a strong sense of duty. A man may, indeed, persuade himself during various periods of his existence that this sense of duty is the better and the purer from not being bribed by the prospect of a future reward, or stimulated, as he would perhaps say, unhealthily by the dread of a future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life, if he has not an eternal future before him, is, depend upon it, futile and impoverished. It is not merely that he has fewer and feebler motives to right action; it is that he has a false estimate, because an under-estimate of his real place in the universe. He has forfeited, in the legitimate sense of the term, his true title to self-respect. He has divested himself of the merit, of the instincts, of the

sense of noble birth and lofty destiny which properly belong to him. He is like the heir to a great name, or to a throne, who is bent on forgetting his lineage and his responsibility in a self-sought degradation. Man cannot, if he would, live with impunity only as a more accomplished kind of animal than are the creatures around him. Man is, by the terms of his existence, a being of eternity, and he cannot unmake himself. He cannot take up a position which abdicates his highest prerogatives without, sooner or later, sinking down into degradations which are in themselves a punishment.

Man, then, needs a hope, resting on something which is beyond the sphere of sense and time. And God has given him one by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our Lord, indeed, taught in the plainest language the reality of a future life. "In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." "These shall go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." "God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him." Passages of this kind from among the very words of Christ might be multiplied. But, in teaching that man would thus live after death, our Lord was teaching what, with various degrees of distinctness, Pagans and Jews had taught before Him. He contributed to the establishment of this truth in the deepest conviction of man. Not merely lessons taught in words, but a fact palpable to the senses. When He rose, after saying that He would rise from the grave, He broke up the spell of the law of death. He made it plain within the precincts of this visible world that a world unseen and eternal, but most real, awaits us hereafter. He converted hopes, surmises, speculations, trains of inference, into the strongest certainties. "Because I live ye shall live also." This was the motto which henceforth faith, under the guidance of reason, descried as the legend which was traced over the doorway of Christ's empty

sepulchre. For that He had risen was not a secret whispered to the few; it was a fact verified by the senses of more than five hundred witnesses. It was established in the face of a jealous, implacable criticism, which endeavoured to silence by violence its eloquent protestation that there is indeed a world beyond the grave.

Not that the fact of Christ's resurrection could force itself upon reluctant minds, or, I would rather say, upon reluctant wills. In the earliest ages, as now, there were expedients enough at hand for evading its force. It was a trick of the disciples, men said; or, it was a phantom apparition; or, it was the product of a woman's excited imagination; or, it was a prosaic transfer to the history of an individual of that which was true, but only true, of the deathless idea which He had taught to man. The evangelical narrative, the conviction of the earliest Church, the moral strength of the Church advancing through blood, advancing through untold suffering to the heights of a world-wide empire, arrests these expedients. It arrests them as inconsistent with reason, as inconsistent with fact. St. Paul's argument,—that if Christ be not risen our labour is vain, your faith is also vain,—is really an appeal to common sense. Is it probable, the apostle suggests, that we apostles should have ventured everything, that we should have surrendered everything, that we should be prepared to endure everything for the sake of a transcendental faith, without having been careful to assure ourselves of the literal truth of the fact on which that faith rests?

My brethren, there are three forms of interest which might be accorded to such a fact as the resurrection. The first, the interest of curiosity in a wonder altogether at variance with the observed course of nature. This interest may exist in a higher degree, observing and registering the fact, yet never for one moment getting beyond the fact. The second, the interest of active reason, which is satisfied that such a fact must have consequences, and is anxious to trace them, an

interest which may lead a man to see that the resurrection does, intellectually speaking, prove the truth of the mission of Christ, even although the man may know nothing of the power of Christ's blood and of His Spirit. And a third kind of interest is practical, moral, spiritual. It is an effort to answer this question, "What does Christ's resurrection say to me? What does it mean for me? If it is true, if Christianity through it is true, there ought to be the effect on my thoughts, my feelings, my life." And St. Peter would answer, all of them, thought, feeling, life, should be invigorated by a force, the force of a living hope. But then this absorbing, this moral interest does not come of any ordinary process of observation and reason, like those two earlier forms of interest. We are, St. Peter says, using a remarkable expression, "begotten unto it." It is no outcome of our natural stock of common sense, though it does not contradict that common sense. It is the product of a divine breath playing upon the soul and giving it a new birth, a new capacity for life. Of this birth the Father of souls is the author, the Eternal Spirit is the instrument; union with Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, is the essence, the effect. It does much else for us, this new birth; but it does this among other things, and not the least among them, it endows us with a living hope. Looking to the rising of Christ, we Christians live in the future even more than in the present. It is part of our new nature to do so, just as surely as it is natural to a pagan to be engrossed with the things of sense and time.

St. Peter calls this hope a lively or a living hope. What does he mean by this? There are within many a soul tracings of powers, of ideas, of feelings which once lived, but which, having died away, we investigate, it may be, from time to time, like the buried ruins of a mental Pompeii or Herculaneum. Every man in later life finds this to be increasingly the case. He finds that the soil of his mind is more and more strewn with the husks of hope which have ceased to live.

Time and disappointment do their work, and we bury away our early enthusiasms as quietly as we can, as one after another they cease to burn within us. But the hope of the Christian lives. Earthly disappointments do but force him to make the more of it. The lapse of time does but bring him nearer to its great object. This hope is not subject to those laws of decay which tell up the strength and the vitality of a merely human enthusiasm. The vigour of this life is in an inverse proportion to that of the decaying frame upon which years have done or are doing their work, and which is drawing onwards in its course towards the portals of the grave. Brethren, we can ask ourselves few questions so important as, "Have I this hope? and, if not, what is the real value of any other hopes that I may have? They do not take me beyond the frontiers of time. They must fail and perish sooner or later when the end draws near. They must be buried utterly and for ever in my grave." "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dies, neither shall his pomp follow him." A hope worth having is, as the apostle says, an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, that entereth within the veil. Its object is thrown beyond the narrow frontiers of this life, beyond this kingdom of change and death. Not to have this hope is to live at random. It is to be drifting on towards eternity without a chart in hand, without a harbour in view. No cry for help can be too earnest or too piercing if such be our case. Nor if we do cry, shall we cry in vain.

And if we have this hope, what are the tests of our possessing it? One that earthly things sit easily upon us. We are not uninterested in them—far from it. We know how much depends upon our way of dealing with them. But also we are not enslaved by them. To have caught a real glimpse of the eternal is to have lost heart and relish for things of time. To have the imperishable clearly in view, is to have perceived the insignificance of all that passes. A living hope of an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled,

enables a Christian to understand the real proportions of things. What things were gain to him these he counts loss for Christ. Another test is willingness to make sacrifices for this hope. We do not really cherish it till we have asked ourselves the question, "What difference do my hopes of another world make in my daily life? What do I do, what do I leave undone that I should not leave undone, or do, if I believed that all really ended in death? What changes would be made in my habits, my occupations, my modes of thought and feeling, if, to put a horrible supposition, I should awake up to-morrow morning and find that Christ's conquest of the eternal world for me was a fable?" Depend upon it the sincerity of our hopes may be measured by the sacrifices which we have made, or which God knows that we are prepared to make on behalf of them. He who ventures little, hopes for little. He who has heaven in view, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal, lays up treasures in heaven; and that he may do so, surrenders all that need be surrendered here. And a last test is inward peace, and its accompaniment, habitual outward cheerfulness. A Christian may have plenty of anxieties; at bottom he is always light-hearted. His soul has found its anchorage in Jesus Christ crucified, risen, ascended, glorified, interceding. He wants no more. The events of life may bear hardly upon him; they do not touch his real self any more than the storm which sweeps the surface of the ocean can agitate the depths below. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

Eternal Jesus, who, when Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers, fix our eyes on that our heavenly inheritance, that washed in Thy blood and sanctified by Thy Spirit, we may live, indeed for that world, from which we shall look back upon death as the gate of an existence which is really life.

BALAAAM THE PROPHET.*

“Therefore now flee thou to thy place : I thought to promote thee unto great honour ; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.”—
NUMB. xxiv. 11.

THE history of Balaam is before us in the three Old Testament lessons appointed for to-day. They together form a complete narrative, which is embodied in the Book of Numbers, and is almost independent of the actual history of Israel, although not by any means without a serious bearing on it. Balaam lived in circumstances sufficiently unlike our own ; but human nature does not change with the change of civilization, and the human conscience, face to face with truth and with duty, repeats its experience, its efforts, its failures, its triumphs, in the most distant climes and ages.

Let us endeavour to study this history very briefly in a practical temper, and with a view to our own improvement. Balaam, it need hardly be said, was a very eminent, he was even an extraordinary man. He lived largely amongst the wild races of the Midianites ; he had gifts and powers which, so far as we know, were entirely unshared by those amongst whom he dwelt. He was, first of all, an observer—a careful observer—of contemporary events. He was a man of trained political sagacity. In his last recorded prophecy we see

* Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday Afternoon, April 15th, 1883.

how much interest he felt in the future of the neighbouring peoples, and the Kenite tribes of the kingdom of Amalek, of the great monarchies of Central Asia, of the navies which had already begun to connect Palestine with the Western world. He was one of those men who generally look on public life rather than take any part in it, and whose judgment is valued by men of action as being the product of more reflection and experience than their own. Balaam, then, corresponds to a writer on history or politics amongst ourselves, who does not go into Parliament, but whose deliberate opinions have more weight than those of many parliamentary speakers. He was consulted, he was alluded to, he was obeyed by energetic people on all sides of him, who felt at least that he saw further than they did, and who were glad to lean to his advice and direction.

And next Balaam was in possession of a truth which, quite apart from its awful and intrinsic value, gives purpose and meaning to a human life. He believed in one God. He lived, we know not how long, in the Mesopotamian city of Pethor, and here he might have fallen in with the descendants of those relatives of Abraham who did not accompany Abraham in his migration from Canaan. From these he might have learned the knowledge of the one true God. This one truth was at the basis of Balaam's thought all through; although he held it with an inconsistent combination of pagan practices, and soothsaying, and divination. He would seem to have fallen to a certain extent under the influence of the degraded public opinion around him, and so he endeavoured to com-

bine his pure faith with the popular heathen sorcery,—just as we see people nowadays unite, with a serious profession of Christianity, proceedings and opinions which it really condemns. However, Balaam's knowledge of this truth, so far as it went, gave him great power amongst his countrymen, and led him, as was natural, to take a deep interest in the fortunes of the people of Israel. From his recorded prophecies it is plain that he had heard of the promises made to the Jewish patriarchs, that he knew something of the text of the Jewish records, the use of the holy name which was revealed to the Jew. He must have heard of the remarkable circumstances attending the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. These had produced a profound impression upon the people of the south-eastern countries, eastward of the Mediterranean, and while the dread of Israel fell on all the races, and Moab was afraid of Israel, was distressed because of the children of Israel, Balaam would have been able to study the secret of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and successful advance across the desert, from his possession of the key of religious sympathy. The heathen around him saw in Israel's history a triumph of physical force, a triumph of good fortune; the triumph, at the best, of certain imaginary divinities like theirs. Balaam knew well enough that the explanation lay far deeper. And this knowledge, at any rate for a time, would have given clearness and decision to his judgment and force and consistency to his actions.

But besides this it is clear that Balaam was endowed in a high degree with the gift of supernatural prophecy. Not only

could he anticipate the future more rapidly than ordinary men, by the trained use of his natural faculties, but he had also the gift of prophetic insight into the future, too remote, too unlike the actual present to be anticipated by the unaided faculties of man. Of this gift his closing words to Balak prove one instance. The prophecy of a star coming out of Jacob is not fully satisfied by the victories of John Hircanus and others; it points to the spiritual empire of Jesus Christ. Here we may pause a moment to take note of the fact that a stranger to Israel, living among a heathen people, himself practising heathen doings, should be thus distinguished by the possession of great religious and supernatural gifts. Israel alone was the people of the revelation in the ancient world; and yet here the accredited organ of revelation is found far beyond his compeers of Israel, and his utterances are actually honoured with a high place in the sacred books of Israel.

Now, this is in keeping with what we find in the whole course of God's dealings with men. God makes covenants; He creates and authorizes sacred institutions; He bestows His presence and approval here, and He withholds it there; and yet He is not so bound by His own rules that they confine His action. He shows ever and anon that His inimitable and exuberant love has outlets which lie beyond the bounds of consecrated system. Balaam was in one age what Melchisedec was in another; what Job was in a third—the organ of truth beyond the frontiers of the kingdom of truth. And when in our day we see beyond the limits of the Church, beyond the limits of Christianity, conspicuous

gifts, if not quite religious, yet beautiful and even saintly characters, that throw into the shade much that we find nearer home, within the enclosure of the garden of the soul—this does not prove that God has done away with the ordinary rules and bounds of His dispensation of grace and truth; it only proves this, that those rules do not always confine His action. Balaam, though not of Israel, was still a great prophet, and this supernatural gift of prophecy enriched the political and religious knowledge which he had acquired naturally—enriched it with a new element of power.

Now, with gifts like these, Balaam was naturally a person of great public consideration. Among the Midianites he took rank even with the princes. His fame was spread far and wide among the neighbouring peoples, especially among the Moabites. Balak, the King of Moab, was in all probability himself a Midianite. He had taken the place of the ancient dynasty when Moab had been weakened by the Amorite victories, and Balak would have opportunities of knowing what was thought of Balaam elsewhere. But men with no knowledge of or interest in religion of their own, are apt to make very odd guesses about those who are in any way connected with it. And Barak seems himself to have looked upon Balaam chiefly as a very powerful wizard. Balaam's highest gifts would have been scarcely intelligible to Balak; or at any rate they were not what Balak wanted in the existing circumstances of Moab. Moab and its king were seriously alarmed at the steady, persistent advance of the house of Israel towards their destined home in Canaan. Israel had now passed the desert and was

encamped in the plains of Moab, a low, flat district along the Jordan and the Dead Sea. From these their neighbouring heights the Moabites could look over the camp of Israel. There was Israel encamped in his numbers, probably exaggerated by the terror of the invaded Moabites. Barak longed to strike a swift and decisive blow. He thought that if the great soothsayer could devote them to destruction by a solemn and publicly pronounced curse, then there would be no doubt about the inevitable struggle of Israel—"I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." In Balak's eyes Balaam was only a weapon of offence in warfare, and needed only to be brought into a position to bear upon the enemy in order to produce results of decisive importance.

Now, Balak's view of Balaam illustrates the way in which in all ages statesmen, who are statesmen, and nothing else, are apt to look upon religion and its representatives. They see in it only one of the great forces which modify or control human life, and they desire, by whatever means, to enlist it on the side of the policy or the Government which they for the moment represent. They do not take the trouble to understand what it is in itself; they do not see that it has its obligations, laws, principles, which cannot be trifled with, if it is not to forfeit its essential character. They look at it not from within, but from without; they measure it not by its inspiring motives, but only by its social and popular results. And as a consequence they often make very great miscalculations about it, especially where the absence of in-

sight into the results of a religious creed upon human action, which comes from their lack of faith in that creed, is not compensated for by a sympathetic imagination which enables a man to put himself readily into the mental and moral circumstances of those who differ from him. Now this was Barak's case. It was clear to him that Balaam's gift would be placed at his disposal if he only paid a sufficient price for it. If the first bid did not succeed, then he would make a second and a larger bid. He did not regard Balaam as having a God or conscience to consult. Balaam was *to him* a merchant with preternatural wares, with a useful commodity to dispose of, and the only question was to ask his price. This mistake as to the availableness of religion for any political purpose that may be in view has been made in all ages of the world's history. Saul made it when in his offhand way he offered sacrifice without waiting for Samuel; Jeroboam made it when he tried to set up idolatrous worship at Dan and Beersheba; the princes of Judah made it when in the last days of the monarchy of Judah they endeavoured to force Jeremiah to advocate what they thought a patriotic policy of reliance upon Egypt against Babylon. Hume made the same mistake. In Hume's well-known "History of the Established Church," he advocates what is oddly called the establishment of religion by the State; because, he says, this enables the State to take the religious principle well in hand, and so repress its tendency to become fanaticism, and to enlist it on the side of measures which the State may think desirable. Without discussing how far that is borne out by experience, a most singular illustration of the

error was afforded by the first Napoleon. When that extraordinary man had conducted the campaign of Austerlitz and brought it to a brilliant conclusion, he addressed himself to religious questions. If at this time he had any creed, it was the creed of a half-convinced Deist. To him religion was almost always, chiefly, a political instrument. He professed a warm devotion to Mohammedanism. He wrote to Pius, as a second Charlemagne. Napoleon, in 1806, thought the dynasty would be safer if the duty of devotion to himself and the dynasty could be brought into a Catechism, which should be used in all the dioceses in France. And under the head of the fifth commandment was framed a political Catechism in the shape of a little book, in which children were told they must obey the general who had recently murdered the Bourbon prince who had fallen into his hands, and this under pain of eternal condemnation. No doubt Christianity owes all the support she can give to existing governments, but this religious principle may be pressed to untenable lengths in particular cases. Napoleon's Catechism was criticised and protested against, slightly modified, but as a whole it was received. It was taught in the French dioceses for eight years, until the peace ; but the acceptance of such a document as that cost the French clergy their moral influence. Napoleon lived too far outside the Church, and destroyed the power whose support he was anxious to secure.

To return, Balaam set himself to work to enlist Balaam's powers on the side of Moab against Israel. First, a deputation conveyed the price of publicly cursing : this went to him and

failed ; it was followed by a second deputation, composed of much more influential people, and promising Balaam very great honour if only he would comply with Barak's request. In the end this deputation succeeded so far as to induce Balaam to go back to Barak. And here we are face to face with the difficult question of the real character of Balaam. This subject was much discussed in the ancient Christian Church, and there were two very different opinions about it. On the one hand, we find Balaam was regarded by St. Augustine and others as a thoroughly bad man, as the devil's prophet, who was compelled by God against his will to utter truths for which he had no heart. On the other hand, St. Jerome considered Balaam a good man, and the prophet of God, who fell through yielding to the temptations of avarice and ambition. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two opinions. Balaam was a mixed character. The real problem we have to deal with in reading his history is one of importance. On the one hand, Balaam was a man with a clear idea of duty, based on a certain knowledge of God. He knew enough about God to feel that, when there was no mistake about God's will, it must be obeyed, if only for reasons of prudence. He knew enough of God's dealings with Israel to fear to trifle with God's plain commands. When he was asked by Barak to curse Israel, he did not answer the question without first asking God for guidance ; and when he was told by God that he must not accept the invitation, he at once declined. "The Lord refuses me leave to go with you." When the invitation was renewed he was equally decided—

“If Balaam would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of God to do less or more.” He only went at last when he had, as he thought, satisfied himself that God permitted him to do so.

And Balaam's sense of duty is not less observable when he had joined Balaak. Balaak naturally thought if Balaam once came there would be no further difficulty. Balaam was careful to say at once that he was not at all free to say just what Balaak might wish: “The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.” And so it happened. There were a ceremony and sacrifices at the royal residence, and the next day Balaam was taken to Ramoth-Baal, or the hill connected with the Baal worship, and commanding a full view over the camp of Israel. And there God met him, apparently condescending to manifest His will even through the pagan heathen auguries he consulted. Balaam blessed Israel altogether, and when expostulated with said, “Must I not speak that which the Lord hath put into my mouth?” Balaak probably thought that there was some sinister influence at work in the spot or the air, although Balaam had been struck with the entire camp and hosts of Israel; and so they moved to another point nearer the camp of Israel, but commanding a much less complete view of it, as it would have been apparently cut out from view by a projecting spur of Mount Pisgah. The sacrifices were offered on the altars of Baal, and Balaam prophesied, and again he announced the victory of Israel, under the Divine protection. There was no enchantment against Israel; no divination against Jacob.

“Behold, I have received a commandment to bless, and I cannot reverse it.” Just like a man who had set a machine in motion whose working he was unable to control. Barak begged the prophet neither to bless nor curse. Silence, he thought, might be best. But Balaam is still true to his text. “Told I not thee all that the Lord saith that I must do?” One more trial Balak thought might yet be made. Balaam was taken to a spot called Bethpeor, in which the Moabite king fondly hoped that the prophet might at last feel himself able to curse Israel. And the altars were built, and the sacrifices offered, but instead of again consulting the auguries, Balaam looked out over the camp of Israel, which was still within his view; and the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and this time the blessing was more explicit than ever before. All the pictures which are most welcomed by the inhabitants of the burning desert—the well-watered valley, the fertile plain, the spice-bearing aloes, the noble cedar, are summoned in his poetry to ascribe the assured prosperity of Israel. Israel’s monarch was to be higher than Agag. To bless Israel was certainly to be blessed; to curse was to be cursed. And here Balak’s dismay gives place to indignation: “Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.” And again Balaam reminded Barak that he had warned him what might happen; and then foretold the conquest of Moab by the Israelites, and prophesied the appearance of a Star out of Jacob, under whom Israel was to advance to the spiritual dominion of the world.

Throughout these circumstances Balaam apparently speaks and acts like a man who has the law of duty before him and obeys it. Barak was right in saying that the Lord had kept him back from honour. Whatever honour was in store for him at the court of Moab was forfeited now. Self-sacrifice is always respectable, and Balaam had a share in it. In that distant age, he, according to his measure, anticipated the reward of that great promise of the Gospel, "Whosoever hath left father, or mother, or lands, or wife, or children, for My sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

But, on the other hand, this devotion to duty was clearly accompanied by another characteristic which explains why Balaam was really the object of God's displeasure, and why he came to a bad end. Balaam, you remember, when he was first asked by Barak to come and curse Israel, referred the question to God in prayer, learned that he ought not to go, and accordingly refused to go. This ought to have been enough for his guidance always. But when Barak made a second obligation, Balaam, though first of all he declined it, allowed himself to treat the question as still open, and consulted God again. And then God answered him according to the desire of his heart, and bade him go. He did go, and God's anger was kindled because he went, and as he went he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and his sword drawn in his hand. How are we to explain this apparent inconsistency in the Divine command to go and the Divine anger at Balaam's obedience? Surely by saying that

the second answer of God to Balaam's inquiry was a reflection, not of God's will, but of Balaam's secret wish. There is such a thing, my brethren—let us take note of it—as the creation of a false conscience. We may wish a particular line of conduct to be our duty until we persuade ourselves that it is really our duty, that it is really what God would have us to do. If instead of acting upon right, when we know it to be right, we pray for further light and knowledge of duty, we may pray ourselves into believing that a wrong is itself right. How easily this may be done, how unobserved and secret the process of doing it may be, is only too apparent to every man who keeps his eyes about him in our daily life. Some of the worst of things that have been done in human history have been done by persons who have acted on what was at the time to them a sense of duty. But then the sense of duty has been a perverted sense, and that perversion has not seldom arisen from the disposition to read human and personal wishes into Divine laws and modes. When we are once clear about a particular portion of God's will we ought not to reconsider it, unless some entirely new facts come to light, which plainly make a real difference in the case before us. In Balaam's case the problem of duty was the same on the second obligation as on the occasion of the first. The persons who urged it were more important, and the bribe was higher; this does not affect the hard question of duty. To have reopened that question was to play a trick with conscience, and one such trick deliberately played with conscience may easily be fatal.

Balaam's sense of duty did not give way altogether. Three times he held out against the importunities of Barak, and uttered the unwelcome truth which God put into his mouth. But for all that his moral constitution was sapped by the fatal wound. His notion of duty was not clearly what he could discover to be God's will; but only what God would not allow him to ignore. It was a minimising rule of duty; and wherever this is the case, with that man a moral catastrophe on a large scale is the result. Balaam, author of some of the most majestic prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures, ended by suggesting that a hideous temptation to iniquity should be placed in the way of the people whose moral superiority he had acknowledged, and died fighting against the cause whose victory he had, at the cost of great personal sacrifice, proclaimed as certain.

Let us notice two or three considerations which the circumstances suggest. The ministry of the greatest truth to others may be quite independent of the personal character of the minister. Truth and grace are God's gifts, not man's. Man is at best the organ of the Divine utterance, the channel through which the Divine influence flows. God does not put Himself into the hands of His human instruments to such an extent as to make His purposes of mercy or illumination depend upon the personal consistency of His ministers with the commission they bear. The profession of a prophet, of a priest, of a clergyman, is one thing, his vocation is another. The first is conferred in the Church of Christ by a valid ordination; it is independent of the character of the recipient.

The Holy Spirit alone brings the character into harmony with the work and powers that follow upon the outward benediction of Christ in His Church. Church history records many an example of men who have taught and worked with conspicuous success, but have failed in the attempts of personal devotion to Him whose livery they wear. As to their future our Lord has warned us, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." And another consideration is, how possible it is to know a great deal about the truth, to make a sacrifice for it, to be kept back from honour, out of deference to its high requirements, and yet to be at heart disloyal to it. When Balaam returned to his home in Midian he probably reflected, as men speak, with just pride, on the manner in which he had conducted himself. He had been exposed to trial; but he resisted bribery and flattery. He had been as good as his word. What had he not achieved for the cause of truth? And yet below all this there was the question, the fundamental question, as to the rectitude of his secret will. The service might but cover, and did cover, the inward rebellion. There are in every generation lives like this. We seem to be gazing on the rosebud, perfect in its form and colour, but a worm is eating away the petals and they will soon fall.

Lastly, the true safeguard against such a fate as Balaam's is love to God. Love is the salt which alone in this poor

human nature of ours saves the sense of duty from decomposition. Had Balaam *loved* God as well as *known* Him, he would not have asked for guidance the second time. One intimation of the will of those whom we love is always enough for a sincere affection. Love rejoices to obey, not because obedience is welcome to self, but because obedience is agreeable to him who is the object we love. Love rejoices in opportunities of resisting self, for love in its very essence is the renunciation and the gift of self to another, whether God or man. Let us pray God that this great gift may be poured into our hearts by His Holy Spirit, that, loving Him above all things, we may obtain the promise which indeed throws into the shade all earthly objects, which exceeds all that we can desire.

ELIJAH ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE.*

“And when he heard that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.”—
I KINGS xix. 3.

It has been more than once observed that some of the men who have left their mark on the age have been subject to great changes, alternating between buoyant enthusiasm and something like despair. At first sight it seems as if the resources of human nature are after all very limited; that which is

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expended in one direction must be withdrawn in another. The waves which raise their crests so proudly above the accustomed level of the ocean, imply, as we know, each one of them a corresponding interval of depression,—as the Psalmist says, “As high as the heavens and down to the valleys beneath,” as the experience of his countrymen in the Phœnician waters. And it is often so with men, and especially with public men : great effort, which attracts the attention of the world, which gives an impression of extraordinary strength or capacity, is often dearly purchased by succeeding hours of depression and weakness. Something of this kind was the case with the late Bishop Wilberforce. The buoyant spirits, the enthusiasm which made him what he was in the pulpit, in the senate, in the public meeting, was dearly paid for by periods of great despondency, when all things seemed dark, when nothing seemed possible, when he was perhaps less equal to the demands of duty than very inferior men. From this characteristic of enthusiasm the mighty prophet who is before us in all the three lessons of to-day was by no means exempt. So great was Elijah’s power, both over men and over nature, that in after ages his countrymen came to regard him as altogether a preternatural personage, whose conduct was not a precedent for, nor a sample of that of an ordinary man. In later times this idea of Elijah was enhanced by the prophecy about his coming before the great day of the Lord, so that when John the Baptist appeared it was the common opinion in Palestine that this was Elias which was for to come. When St. James quotes Elijah as an example of the

efficacy of prayer, he prefaces it by what to us may appear a very obvious and trite remark, but a remark which was by no means unneeded by St. James's first readers,—he says Elias was a man of like passions as we are. Elijah, he means, had his share of impulse and weakness, and therefore the power of his prayer suggested encouragement for others than himself. Now, that Elijah was what St. James thus said of him is at least plain from the lesson before us this afternoon. When Elijah was at Carmel he was at the height of his moral ascendancy, of his supernatural force. Since then he had been a refugee; and had been dependent on the charity of the devout Israelitish widow in the heathen town of Zarephath. No sooner had he returned to the soil of Israel than he shows his astonishing power over all who came in contact with him, as if he, too, had a share in the promise of the King Messiah. "Be thou ruler even in the midst of thine enemies." Obadiah falls awestruck before him. Ahab himself, who had spared no pains to compass his death, acts as a man would act under a resistless spell, and submissively carries out his orders. At his bidding the eight hundred and fifty prophets of the newly-imparted nature-worship are marshalled upon Carmel, and he confronts them in his solitary weakness, in his solitary strength, and then follows an appeal to the people to choose between Baal and the one true God. His challenge to the prophets of Baal; their long fruitless pleadings, prolonged from the early morning to the evening, pleadings accompanied with frantic self-mutilation; and then, after their final failure, Elijah's measured preparations in

accordance with the forgotten principles of the ancient ritual ; his solemn invocation of the God of Israel ; the fire from heaven, the cry, " The Lord He is God," the confusion of the awe-stricken people, and the terrible extermination of the idolaters—there is, all taken together, no other scene like that in the Bible.

Elijah on Carmel represents man's moral ascendancy over his brother man. And this afternoon the scene is changed. Elijah is not on Carmel, but on Horeb. The idolatrous priesthood was indeed exterminated, but Jezebel remained. She had her projects and means of vengeance, and the prophet who had triumphed when confronted by the king, by the court, by the people, by the whole hierarchy, must escape if he would save his life from the implacable fanaticism of the queen. He first fled to Beer-sheba, a town which belongeth to Judah, but on the very confines of the wilderness. He left the boy who waited upon him in the town, veiling his moments of extreme depression even from those who knew him best ; and then wandered out despairingly into the desert and prayed that he might die. And here he was braced for the journey by food which was brought him by no human hands ; a type, as it was always thought by the early Christian Church, of the strengthening and refreshing of the soul by the body and blood of Christ, which enables the Christian pilgrim to cross life's long desert on his way to his true home. Still in deep depression, after a journey of forty days, Elijah reached the sacred mountain, the very scene of the great revelation to Moses.

Its hallowed associations, its dreary and awful solitudes were in keeping with the prophet's thoughts; he entered into a cave—a grotto—which was associated, it is likely, by a real tradition with the name and the work of Moses, and gave himself up to the thoughts which crowded so directly upon his mind. Why had he succeeded so well, only that success should issue, as it seemed, after all, in failure; why had such strength which had been vouchsafed him been followed by such weakness? Was not everything forfeited for which he had struggled; was not his ministry closing in discomfiture and shame, while the insolent and idolatrous queen and her weak and wicked husband were completing the ruin of the religion of Israel? What was the use of attempting anything further? All was really lost, and those who, like himself, had given up their all to a losing cause, had only to bear what might remain of life in sadness and obscurity!

These, or such as these, were his thoughts, when solemnly once and again the searching question came to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Observe how God discovers Himself to Elijah. The word of the Lord, that word which was lodged in Elijah, that word of which he was the instrument and organ, and which he had proclaimed so vividly, so terribly to others, now turned its voice,—I had almost dared to say, its eye,—in upon himself. This word or message which the prophet bears is, we thus see, not his servant but his master; it is not the work of his own mind which he may control, or manipulate, or silence at pleasure; it is a truth, if it be in him, which is yet utterly independent of him, and to it he himself

owes obedience no less than does the very humblest of his hearers. The prophet of old, as the minister of the gospel at the present day, is always the servant of the truth which he proclaims, and he carries it for his own reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness no less than for that of his people. As to the question "What doest thou here, Elijah?" what could he reply? It was, it seemed to the prophet, his zeal for the cause of God; it was his tragic despair, it was his isolation, his crushing sense of impotence and failure, that had brought him to Horeb. "I have been very jealous for the Lord of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I, only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." And his answer is neither accepted nor rejected. It is passed by most significantly without a word of approval or rebuke.

If the prophet would know more of God, and about himself, he must come forth from the cave. He must stand on the mountain-side, face to face with the Infinite. And then, as centuries before on that very spot with Moses, the Lord passed by. The Author of nature, is also the Lord of conscience. And this nature is a book written in characters which those who live in communion with God know how to read. For them the wind, the earthquake, the lightning, are not merely physical phenomena, forces of which they can or cannot, as the case may be, furnish themselves with an adequate scientific account. They are outward signs of invisible realities, that belong to the human and to the moral

world. Nature is a robe of beauty, distinct indeed from the Creator Himself, since it is the work of His hands. What was the great and strong wind that rent the mountain, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the natural figure of the tempestuous impulse which had carried the prophet onward ever since he left, in his early youth, his native hills of Gilead? What was the earthquake, with its deep mutterings, with its violent shocks of upheaval, ruin, and crashing violence, but the image of convulsions of which Elijah's own soul, and many another soul around, had been the scene? What was the lightning, playing incessantly around the prophet on the mountain side, but the reflection of the heaven-sent burning zeal which had been from the first the spirit of his work and of his life? And yet, as the wind, and the earthquake, and the fire succeeded each other, the prophet felt that they no longer meant for him what they would have meant as he stood of old on Carmel. They were signs of states of mind which once seemed instinct with the life of God, but which now, for the first time, he knew to be without it. Strong religious impulse may be more than half physical—a matter of temperament; a matter of constitution. Earthly passions in some natures may take this precise form. Even though mountains of opposition are rent by it, and changes brought about which fill the thoughts of man and which live in the pages of history; yet it may be that the agency which effects all this is in itself destitute of anything that is properly divine; and the Lord is not in the wind.

“And the Lord was not in the earthquake.” Spasmodic

terror may be *only* terror. The thought or sight or immediate apprehension of death may convulse, does convulse to its very depths the human soul. There must have been many such moments of intensified agony the other day in that dreadful scene in the Italian island. But mere mental agitation may be only desperate. The fear of the Lord, as distinct from anything else, is the beginning of wisdom. Whether the Lord is in or is not in these great earthquakes of the soul depends, generally speaking, upon the soul's previous relations with him.

“And the Lord was not in the fire.” He had been in the burning bush. He was in after ages in those fiery tongues at Pentecost. He was not in the fire which played around Elijah on Horeb. Religious passion carried to the highest point of enthusiasm is a great agency in human life, but religious passion *may* easily be too inconsiderate, too truculent, too entirely wanting in tenderness and in charity, to be in any sense Divine. Christendom has been the scene of the most Divine enthusiasm of which the soul of man has ever had experience in the whole course of its history. But Christendom has also been ablaze again and again with fires, and these fires are not extinct in our own day and country, of which it may certainly be said that the Lord is not in them.

“And after the fire a still small voice.” In physical impulse, in convulsive terror, in the white heat of emotion gleaming with sacred things, we may seek for God in vain; but when conscience speaks clearly, we may be sure of His presence. Conscience is His inward messenger, and in its quiet whisper

we listen to an echo from the Infinite and the Unseen. We may, alas! play tricks with it, we may drug it, corrupt it in many ways, and eventually silence it; but if we will let it alone, if we will listen to it, it places us surely in the presence of God.—“After the fire, a still small voice!”

Conscience, then, repeated the question, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” and the question implied, beyond all doubt, that Elijah had better have been elsewhere, and that the state of mind which had brought him to Horeb was not altogether right or healthy, and Elijah was still in deep gloom; he had yielded to it, and now heard within the voice of reproach, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” Let us observe the character of Elijah’s despondency. Its motive was beyond all question unselfish and noble. It is true that he does complain, “They seek my life to take it away.” But he is only thinking of *himself* as the representative of a great cause. He is not speaking in his prophetic or personal capacity. As a *man*, he would, if it might be, gladly die. “Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers,”—so he had prayed in the wilderness of Beer-sheba; but as a *prophet* he desired to live for the sake of the truth he had at heart. He felt that the sword which would strike him was really aimed at that which he would represent. The forsaken covenants, the ruined altars, the slaughtered prophets—these filled his mind and heart; these explained why he was so far from the boundaries of Israel, and a refugee in the mountains of Horeb. Such reflections were better than lightheartedness, which is based upon an indifference to the most precious things of life.

It augurs ill for the state when its citizens are satisfied with their condition, and have no thought for the welfare of others. It augurs ill for the Church that talks about personal religion, as if there were no prayer or care due to the great societies of Christians united to the Saviour, and what St. Paul calls the "body of Christ." Prophecy has a stern word for those who are not grieved at the affliction of Jacob.

The motive of Elijah's despondency was noble, but his despondency was wrong. He might have remembered that what passed for the moment in life is no measure for what is determined in heaven. He might have thought, while duties are ours, events are in the hands of God. He might have associated himself with those lines, already ancient, of David, written we now know with little less than certainty, when the first mutterings of Absalom's rebellion were being heard,—"In the Lord put I my trust . . . for lo, the ungodly bend their bow and make ready their arrows within the quiver, that they may privily shoot at them which are true of heart. The foundations will be cast down, and what hath the righteous done? The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's seat is in heaven."

Now these directions, whispered by the "still small voice" to the conscience of Elijah, involved two principles. Elijah was not to dwell on the *abstract aspects of evil*. He was to address himself to the *practical duties* that lay around his path. Evil in its massive accumulations, evil in its widespread empire, evil in the strong and subtle ascendancy which from time to time it acquires among men, is indeed beyond us. We

know our separate weakness cannot banish it from the world ; we lose precious time if we try to weigh and measure it.

Our first wisdom is to pray to be delivered from it. There is a fact, a vast and terrible fact, a fact permitted for reasons which we guess at rather than decipher ; if the children of Israel had broken the covenant, if they had destroyed the altars, and slain the Lord's prophets with the sword, that was now a *past* fact, a permitted fact, and so far it was beyond the control of Elijah. We only weaken ourselves by dwelling upon mischief which we cannot hope to remedy. We have only a certain amount of thought, of feeling, of resolve, each one of us to dispose of, and if this has been expended unavailingly on the abstract, on the intangible, it is expended, and is no longer ours, and we cannot employ it when and where we need it close at home. Secondly, Elijah was to begin his work with *individuals*. He was to deal with men one by one. He was to anoint Hazael, who, though a heathen monarch, was yet to have a place in the Divine government of the world ; that duty lies furthest on the frontier of thy work. He was to anoint Jehu, who will execute judgment on apostate Israel ; and provide for thy ministry when thou art gone hence, Elijah ; that should be thy first concern. One of the fallacies of an age like ours is the notion that men can be really improved if they are dealt with in masses. General legislation or oratory which deals with men in the block, which ignores the care and needs of the separate soul—these are common enough. All this fallacy is the result partly of the characteristic opportunities of the modern world, partly of the inertness

which shrinks from the hard and humble work of dealing with single characters. These general measures have, no doubt, their value; sometimes their very great value, as supplementary influences; but they are almost worthless when they are regarded as substitutes for that careful indispensable labour with single souls, which alone secures real changes in hearts and characters. A proclamation in general terms would have had little effect upon Israel. The anointing of Jehu and the appointment of Elisha were to be pregnant with consequences. "What doest thou here?" To every human being in his most serious moment this question must be suggested: Why am I where I am? Doing what I do? Thinking what I think? Saying what I say? What is the motive which shapes and guides my life, making me do this rather than that, making me take this turn in life rather than the other, choosing these friends, throwing myself into these interests, into these trains of thought, into these associations, into these enterprises? What it is that exactly engages each one of us matters little, comparatively little, if the motive to be doing God's will is actively recognised. It may be the most important duties in Church or State; it may be the daily toil of the shop-boy or the domestic servant; all is equally noble if the great motive be there; all is equally degraded if the great motive be absent. "What would you do," a very good man was once asked, who was playing a game of draughts with his little son, "if you knew you would die in five minutes?" "I should finish this game of draughts," was the reply. Work and recreation are equally

legitimate if each is treated as part of the will of God ; if through life the awful significancé of life is with us the great motive for which we must surely account to our Maker, which has been purchased back from ruin by the incarnation and death of our Divine Redeemer, be steadily kept in view. There may be very good reasons for spending portions of it on Horeb as well as upon Carmel ; but the essential point is that we should be where we are, that we should be doing what we are doing, because, so far as we know, He who has given us the gift of life wills this, wills nothing else respecting us.

ST. PETER'S PROTEST.*

“ Peter answered and said unto Him, though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.”—MATT. xxvi. 31.

No other apostle makes us feel so much at home with him as St. Peter. He is one of the three or four of whom we know most. St. John, of course, the beloved disciple, has a great place in our hearts, but then we know that his relationship to our Lord is unique. St. Paul's labours are so abundant, his place in the New Testament is so commanding, that we see and hear more of him than of any other apostle ; but then he is as much beyond us in his work as is St. John in his love. The two apostles St. James', the first martyred apostle and the

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first cousin of the Lord, august and beautiful figures as they are, are more in the background : we see them far less distinctly. St. Peter indeed in point of rank is, as St. Matthew expressly says, the first apostle, and yet this does not destroy our sense of fellowship with his personal character : he has,—if it be not irreverent to say so,—he has so much in common with ourselves ; he so draws us to him by his humanity, by his eagerness, by his impetuosity, by his enthusiasm,—nay, by his weakness, by his rashness, by his buoyancy, by his self-reproving penitence. And we feel all this especially in the pathetic scene which is described in the second lesson for this afternoon. The Holy Sacrament had just been instituted ; the disciples had sung the hymn of thanksgiving, and they had gone out to the Mount of Olives, and St. Peter ventured to ask the question, “ Whither goest Thou ? ” It was in Peter the language of anxious love, and our Lord answered it by saying that Peter, though still unprepared, should yet in the end follow Him. And then Peter made his first protest of unfailing loyalty, and our Lord first predicted His coming fall. A second protestation and a second warning is described in the text. Our Lord had mercifully vouchsafed to warn the apostles that they were on the eve of a scene which had been described in prophecy. Then saith Jesus unto them, “ All ye shall be offended because of Me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.” The prophecy is from Zechariah, but our Lord employs a word which recalls another and a sterner prophecy in Isaiah. It is that in which Israel was warned that the

Lord would one day become to Israel a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; and St. Paul, as we know, tells the Romans that this was fulfilled when in the later days of the apostles the majority of the Jewish people deliberately rejected Jesus as the true Messiah. But to be offended at God or His representative was a crime and a misery from which good Jews shrank back with terror, so that when our Lord used this word describing what would presently be the conduct of His own disciples, the prediction roused St. Peter once more to make a counter-protest, that whatever might be the case with others, he at least would answer for himself: "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." He soon had occasion to discover how far he had meant his words. He was chosen to witness the agony in Gethsemane, along with St. James and St. John. He stood by while his Master was arrested. He followed our Lord to the house of the high priest, and there, as he sat in the outer hall among the servants and the many waiting there, his trial came on him, but found him unprepared. Thrice he was challenged: thrice, and the last time with passionate vehemence, he denied his Master, and when our Lord turned and looked upon Peter, that glance recalled the words, "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended."

Now one reason of St. Peter's over-confidence was that he did not realize the situation which was awaiting him. As yet, he had had no experience of any trial of the kind, and he seems not to have had that kind of imagination which can anticipate the untried with any sort of accuracy. When he said, "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended," he had not thought out in detail what was

meant by the contingency which he thus describes. He had never yet seen his Master deserted by His friends and disciples, and he really treats such an occurrence in his inmost heart as utterly improbable. It is for him so improbable, that he can afford to say without much reflection what he would do if it arose. He refers to it with that absence of entire seriousness with which men sometimes proclaim publicly how they would act if they were to find themselves in positions which they are not likely in any event to occupy. And thus civilians argue at length and with warmth as to the best way of handling Her Majesty's forces in the field; and thus writers for the press explain how, if they were bishops, they would steer the Church through existing controversies. All such persons express themselves with freedom, and even with audacity, because they never look forward to be put to the proof. If they had to discuss great affairs as those who are actually responsible for their conduct, they would be no doubt much less emphatic and striking in what they say; but, at the same time, they would be much wiser. They would think out the situation in all its bearings, and this patient thorough travail of thought would produce in them a salutary hesitation.

Had St. Peter placed clearly before his mind what was meant by all men being offended at Christ, had he pictured to himself how matters would stand when even St. James, even St. John had forsaken the Divine Master, he would have shrunk from adding his concluding words, or at least he would have turned them into a prayer: "Grant, Lord, that I in my sin and my weakness may not be offended at Thee."

St. Peter's confidence was then first of all the confidence of inexperience, aided by lack of imagination. It is repeated again and again under our eyes at the present day. Castles

in the air are built by inexperienced virtue, to be demolished, alas! at the first touch of the realities of vice. The country lad who has been brought up in a Christian home, and is coming up to some great business house in London, makes vigorous protestations of what he will and will not do in a sphere of life of the surroundings of which he can as yet form no true idea whatever. The emigrant who is looking forward to spend his days in a young colony where the whole apparatus of Christian and civilized life is yet in its infancy, or is altogether wanting, makes plans, leaving the surroundings of a situation, of which he cannot at all as yet from the nature of the case take the measure, altogether out of account. The candidate for holy orders, who anticipates his responsibilities from afar, gathering them from books, gathering them from occasional intercourse with clergymen, makes resolutions which he finds have to be revised by the light of altogether unforeseen experiences. St. Peter never knew what it was to be the only human being loyal to Christ until he sat in that outer court of the high priest's palace, and the terrible isolation was too much for him. All men were indeed then in that tragic moment,—all were offended at his Lord, and after a struggle he, *he* too was offended.

And closely allied to this general failure to realise an untried set of circumstances was St. Peter's insufficient sense at this period of his life of the possibly awful power of an entirely new form of temptation. He had as yet, it might seem, had no very great trial to undergo. After giving up his own calling as a fisherman to follow our Saviour, he had, like the rest, been kept privily in His presence from the provoking of all men; He had accompanied our Lord in His journeys; he had witnessed the healing of his own mother-in-law in his

own house ; he had been one of the three selected witnesses of the raising of Jairus's daughter ; he had been placed at the head of the list of the apostles who were chosen from among the body of disciples to wait specially on the person of our Lord, and who were endowed with higher powers than nature could give them in order to enable them to spread His kingdom among men. He had, on two occasions especially, shown a devotion to our Lord, and an insight into His real claims and character, which were not at the time shared by the other apostles. When our Lord preached in the great synagogue of Capernaum, and taught how hereafter men should live by eating and drinking His body and blood in the sacrament of the Holy Communion, many of the disciples took offence and deserted Him, and Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away ? And at once Peter became the spokesman of the rest. " Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And again at Cæsarea Philippi, when our Lord asked the twelve, on their return from their first missionary enterprise, whom they as distinct from mankind in general said that He was, St. Peter stepped forward with the confession, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ;" and he was rewarded by the great blessing which was fulfilled by his personal labours immediately after the day of Pentecost : " I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If we find in St. Peter's earlier history elements of a different kind ; if his remonstrance with our Lord, who had foretold His own humiliation and death, was even presumptuous ; if he was, as it might seem, almost bewildered on the Mount of the Transfiguration ; if his question, " How far

shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?" shows that he had not yet learned the true moral meaning of the Gospel law; if his sinking in the water when he had left the ship to go to Jesus implies partial failure of faith; if his question, "We have left all and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?" betrays a lack of perfect disinterestedness—still, the great confessions at Capernaum and at Cæsarea Philippi,—these were keynotes, these were the ruling principles of his life, and they might have seemed to make it certain that he could trust himself never to be offended. Of what actually happened to St. Peter we may see instances enough in history or in daily life. A man living in a comparatively obscure position is exemplary; his little failures do but serve to set forth the sterling worth of his general character. He seems to be marked out for some promotion; his friends predict, all the world predicts, that he will be a great success, since he has shown on a small scale excellences which will certainly distinguish him and will adorn a larger sphere. He is promoted, and he turns out a hopeless failure. "How extraordinary!" cries out the world. "Who could have anticipated it?" exclaim his friends. And yet the explanation may be a very simple one. He may have been, by the change of circumstances, for the first time in his life put under the influence of a temptation hitherto unknown to him. He may have been tempted in his earlier years by appeals to avarice, by appeals to illicit desire, by appeals to personal vanity, but never, never as yet to the pressure of the fear of man. In that place of prominence he for the first time feels the fear of a mass of human opinion which he does not in his conscience and in his heart respect, but which he fears only because it is a mass. And this fear is too much for him, too much for his

sense of justice, for his charity, for his consistency with his former self. Alas! that new temptation has found out a weak place in his moral nature, it has sprung a leak in him, and the disappointment is as keen to-day as his expectations of yesterday were unduly sanguine. *Capax imperii nisi imperasset*,—an admirable emperor if he only had never reigned,—was the historian's saying about one of the rulers of the ancient world; and this is true of many man who, after years of good conduct, are placed for the first time in life under the play and stress of an entirely new temptation. So it was with St. Peter. He sat down in the outer hall to see the end, and then came the side glancings and the rising suspicions of discipleship, and the partial identification, and the long whispered conjectures, and the openly uttered fierce remarks, and the vehement assertions, each one more positive than the preceding, "This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth;" "Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee;" and behind all this was the accumulated fund of deep, implacable, angry passion that filled the hearts of the Jewish people, and that was bent upon its projects of vengeance with all the apparatus of mock justice and swift torture and execution at its disposal; and Peter's heart sank within him. Here was a motive, the power of which he had never experienced, never suspected.

And once more St. Peter's over-confidence would seem to have been due in part to his natural temperament, and to his reliance on it. Impetuosity was the basis of his character; it had stood him in good stead; it had no doubt been strengthened by exercise during his earlier years as a fisherman of the Galilean lake. God's grace does not destroy the natural character; it purifies, it raises, it sanctifies character. St.

Peter's nature took a new direction after his conversion to Christ, but its main features, its substance, its stock, remained as before—hopeful, eager, sanguine, impetuous. While grace is trustworthy in time of trial, nature, as we many of us know, may be expected to give way. This confusion between grace and nature has constantly occurred in the history of Christendom. One great instance of it is noteworthy in the enthusiasm which led to the Crusades. No well-informed and fair-minded man can question the genuine love of our Lord Jesus Christ which filled such men as Peter the Hermit, and still more that great preacher and writer St. Bernard. These men exerted an influence some seven centuries ago, upon the populace of central Europe, to which the modern world affords absolutely no parallel, and at their voice thousands of men in all ranks of life left their homes to rescue, if it might be, the sacred soil on which the Redeemer had lived and died from the hands of the infidel. So they filled the fortresses, the warriors of those days; and who can doubt that of these not a few were animated by a motive which is always noble—that of giving the best they had to give, their very lives, to the God who had made and redeemed them? But, also, who can doubt that many, perhaps the large multitude, were really impelled by very different considerations, which gathered round this central idea, and seemed to receive from it some sort of consecration; that a love of adventure, a love of reputation, a desire to escape from troubled times at home, the hope of influence or power which might be of use elsewhere than in Palestine, which might make a family name, which might found or consolidate a dynasty—also entered into the sum of moral forces which precipitated the crusading hosts on the coasts of Syria?

Another instance is observable in the manner in which, even in our own day, a great many persons hold what is called the theory of assurance. If you have an assurance that you are saved, then you are saved. If you do not feel this assurance, then you are not saved. Yet how precarious, how untrustworthy is the ground on which that theory proceeds! A robust physical temperament will sometimes issue in that very frame of easy confidence towards God which is called, far too lightly, spiritual assurance; and gentle, tender, sensitive consciences, who are overpowered by the sense of their own deficiencies, without being at all insensible to the greatness of our Saviour's redeeming love, cannot attain to this easy and confident and off-hand frame of mind, do what they will. Is it certain, think you, that in the eyes of Him who sees us as we are the man of robust self-confidence is saved, and the man of hesitating, reverent self-distrust is lost? Is it certain that the first exhibits only the strength and majesty of God's grace, and the second only the weakness and faithlessness of unregenerate nature? Assurance is a spiritual thing, not a matter of temperament, and it is never divorced from the conviction that, as while there is life hope is always possible, so, on the other hand, while probation lasts there must be always at least the possibility of failure. Even St. Paul expresses his anxiety "lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Certainly we cannot think too highly of the great gift of perseverance. The Bible is full of it from the Psalmist to St. John. It is a great gift; and, instead of assuming that it has been certainly given to us, we would do well to pray for it. Prayer is safe for such men as you and I,—safer than expressions of confidence as to what we are, and as to what we shall be, even

though we acknowledge that it is only the grace of God which makes us what we are.

What, then, is the lesson which we are to try to carry away from this one point in St. Peter's history? Not, assuredly, to think cheaply of moral and religious enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the glow of the soul, the lever by which men are raised above their average level, and become capable of a goodness and a benevolence which but for it would be impossible. The soul of man, like nature, has its revenge sooner or later on all pedantic one-sidedness. If enthusiasm is expelled from the life of one generation, it reappears in that of the next. The last century did not gain much by depreciating it: that age of cold, clear reason, as it fancied itself to be, was closed, at least on the continent, by a tempest of irrational passion without a parallel in the history of the world. But what this episode really teaches us is to measure well, if possible, our religious language, especially the language of fervour and devotion. When the sons of Zebedee asked through their mother to sit the one on Christ's right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom, He checked aspirations the true import of which they had not weighed. When the young man came to Him with the question, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" our Lord saw that he was using language which he did not mean, and that he had no idea as to who it was to whom he thus lightly paid a conventional compliment. "Why callest thou Me good?" And so, again, our Lord contrasts the servant who said, "I go, sir!" and went not, with the servant who made no profession of obedience, and yet went. When religious language outruns practice or conviction, the general character is weakened; it is weakened by any insincerity: it is especially weakened by

insincerity addressed to the All-true. Let us be sparing of free professions of our own. Especially let us, in the words of to-day's Collect, "pray Him from whose only gift it cometh, that His faithful people do unto Him true and laudable service, to enable us so faithfully to serve Him in this life, even to the end that when its trials are over we fail not finally to attain His heavenly promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

WISDOM.*

"And wisdom is justified of all her children."—LUKE vii. 35.

OUR LORD is discussing the criticisms which the Jews of His day made upon Himself and upon St. John the Baptist. St. John was a strict ascetic, leading a hermit life in the desert, and the Jews said that he was possessed by an evil spirit. Our Lord, on the other hand, mixed freely with the world. He was at the wedding feast in Cana; He was at the entertainment given by Matthew the publican, and by Simon the Pharisee. The Jews forthwith condemned Him as a man devoted to the pleasures of the table, and fond of low company. "John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and ye say, He hath a devil; the Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Whatever they might be, whatever they might do, it seemed that neither our Lord nor the Baptist would be free from censure. And our Lord accounts for this by describing the Jews of that generation as entirely wanting in seriousness. He compares them

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to children playing in the public thoroughfare, imitating in their games as children the occasions and the solemnities of daily life,—playing at weddings, playing at funerals, reproducing, as best they might the appropriate cues, whether merry or mournful. And, in the eyes of these Jews, the Baptist and the Divine speaker Himself were like ill-natured playfellows who did not enter into their games, or who, at any rate, would not take the parts assigned to them. “We have piped unto you,” so runs the Jewish complaint or remonstrance,—“we have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented.”

The Baptist, it seems, did not respond to the invitation to merriment; our Lord did not respond to the invitation to what would have been in Him an unbecoming and inappropriate sadness. And the Jews, therefore, condemned them for contradictory reasons—St. John for not being what our Lord was—our Lord for not resembling St. John. It could not be otherwise. That generation of Jews would know no better, but the true children of the Divine wisdom, they would know that both St. John and our Lord were right in adhering to their different modes of life. Wisdom, He says, is justified, is done justice to as being wisdom, by all her children. Our Lord’s saying grows naturally out of the comparison which He has just made. The children selling in the world’s great market-place suggest to Him another sort of children, the children of wisdom. Wisdom is a parent; a certain number of human beings are children of wisdom, and children as a rule may be expected to understand their parents, to do them justice when the world at large finds fault with them. A child, it may be presumed, is more or less like

his parent; he has a sympathy with him arising out of a common character and a common mental constitution, which enables him to understand what his parent means. He is familiar from long association and habit with his parent's ways of looking at things; he is in the secret of his parent's mind; he sees method where others see only confusion. He can anticipate with confidence where to others all is dark and meaningless. And thus our Lord tells us, if wisdom is misunderstood by men at large, there is no such misunderstanding in wisdom's own family circle. There, at least, the dull and ill-natured world is shut out, while bright and loving faces gaze upon their parent's countenance with a certainty that all is wise and well. The true children of the eternal wisdom were not, even in those days, shocked because John the Baptist came as an ascetic, because the Son of Man came eating and drinking.

It will be useful perhaps if we consider this saying of our Divine Lord somewhat more in detail. We trace the truth and the applicability of the principle of this saying, first of all in the different fields of purely human interest and study. Each subject that engages the attention of man has a wisdom, that is to say, governing principles and methods, modes of thought and enquiry—in short, a philosophy peculiarly its own. Those who have mastered this wisdom even in part are prepared for results which are startling or absurd in the eyes of others who are strangers to it. Thus, for instance, in our day there is a sort of chronic misunderstanding between those whose habits of thought, or whose pursuits of life, lead them to be conversant only or mainly with probable evidence, and the students of the exact sciences. To the first-named class the men of the exact sciences seem to be without the

mental faculty which enables them to understand the worth of an argument which is based on probability; and to the scientific men, the moralists, the historians, the divines constantly seem to be contenting themselves with what is nothing better than fancy, when they ought only to be satisfied with truth. The fact is that each great department of thought has a wisdom of its own. The mathematician or physicist would be very ill-advised indeed if he were to content himself with probabilities; the moralist or the divine would be just as mistaken if he were to ask for experimental certainty in spheres where such certainty is, from the nature of the case, unattainable. In the world of the senses the empiric understanding reigns supreme; the intrusion of what we call heart, conscience, the moral faculty, would be here an impertinence. In the world of spiritual truth the scientific or empiric intellect is blind and powerless. The moral faculties instructed and guided by revelation alone can judge, and thus each region of truth has a faculty proper to be investigated. Each has a wisdom or principle of its own, and those who do not share in it are like ordinary Englishmen listening to a rapid conversation between foreigners, or like Africans or New Zealanders inspecting for the first time the machinery of a great English manufactory. In this sense each kind of human wisdom is justified by its children, and by its children only.

And next we see the truth of the principle in the region of human character. In good men there are constantly features of character which those about them cannot account for. They are reserved or they are impetuous; they are high-spirited or they are depressed; they deviate in many ways from conventional standards; they baulk expectations; and they are pronounced morbid, eccentric, inconsistent, as the case may

be. They act when we expect them to hold their hands ; they are quiet when all seems to call for action. We, perhaps, say that they are unintelligible, and so it may be that they are to us, only because we are not in the secret of their characters. For each character, like each pursuit, like each art, like each science, has a wisdom of its own, its own governing principles, its own ruling instincts, its own constant tendencies. Only when we enter into this can we hope to understand it, only when we place ourselves at the point of view of the speaker or the agent who perplexes us—only then do we see consistency in motive where else so much seems to be so unaccountable and so strange. Here, too, wisdom is justified of her children, while as a thing of course the rest of the world finds fault with her. That which enables us to do justice to character is sympathy with it. We rightly condemn the coarse saying of the Jews about St. John : “He hath a devil.” But is it quite certain that in their places you and I would have done better ? What would many of us have said of a man who lived as a hermit apart from the haunts of men, only leaving his desert home to denounce the sins of powerful classes or vices of kings ? What should we say of his raiment of camel’s hair, of his meat of locusts and wild honey, or of the equivalents of these things in modern life, and all that they would imply as to character and purpose ? Should we not denounce and deplore them as silly, as extreme, as eccentric—unless indeed we had caught sight of the wisdom of the principle which accounted for them, and of which they were the natural outgrowth and expression ? Given St. John’s sense of the vast evil of unrighteousness, of the necessity of making a way in men’s hearts for the Divine Redeemer by bringing men to true repentance, and all forthwith falls into its place. His

language is even moderate, his conduct is very sagacious, his life just that which was needed if he was to succeed in impressing an age such as his own. As Christians, we, of course, judge still more sternly that Jewish saying about our Lord, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. But had we lived in those days is it quite certain that we should not have approved of them? The Jews resented our Lord's appearance at entertainments, while He was making serious demands on the self-denial of mankind. Men were to deny themselves and take up the cross, and as yet He was feasting with Matthew the publican, with Simon the Pharisee. Should we not have pointed to what the Jews thought a proof of laxity, a proof of worldliness? Should we have had the self-distrust, the patience, the equitableness of temper which might have led us to suspect or to perceive that His work obliged Him to mix constantly with all kinds of people, and that He could not have lived as did John the Baptist without being untrue to Himself. It does not, indeed, follow that, because a man's conduct is often or at times unintelligible, he is therefore a misunderstood saint. The good may often be in the world's judgment unintelligible, but the unintelligible are not, therefore, always the good. Eccentricity and goodness are more often disjointed than they are united. It would indeed go hard with the world if they were strictly convertible terms. Eccentricity is not seldom the growth of vanity, whether it be rampant or subtle vanity. When this is the case the world judges it quite rightly in condemning it, but nevertheless the good often speak and act in ways which men only condemn because they do not enter into and sympathise with the lofty character of the agent or the speaker. So it was when our Lord was at

the house of Simon that the poor lost penitent sinner anointed Him with her ointment and bathed His feet with her tears ; that our Lord should have allowed her, being such as she was, even to touch Him, was in Simon's eyes a clear proof that He had no real knowledge of life and character. Simon himself, most assuredly, as a respectable Pharisee, could never have permitted anything of the kind. "This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him." Our Lord's real mind, the mind of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost, the Pharisee had no sympathy even of an elementary sort with, and He illustrates thus from the negative side the truth that it is only by the children of the Divine wisdom, who sympathise with its real principles, that its ways are justified.

And once more our Lord's words hold good of the Christian creed. Here, too, it is clear, upon reflection, that wisdom is justified of her children. Let us remark that the word wisdom, in our Lord's mouth, had especial significance. As He pronounced it, His more instructed hearers would have recognised an ancient, and I may say a consecrated, word. In the Book of Proverbs the Wisdom of God is no mere quality or attribute, corresponding in God to what would be Wisdom in man. It is more than an attribute ; it is almost what we should call in modern language a person. Read the great appeal of Wisdom in the first chapter of Proverbs ; read the sublime passage in the eighth chapter, in which Christianity has always recognised the pre-existence of the eternal Son. This Wisdom of God, dwelling with Him from all eternity, being Himself, and yet having a personal subsistence of its own, was, we may be sure, in the thought of

our Lord when He used the word. It was the Wisdom of God, as He elsewhere says, who sent to His people the prophets, the wise men, the scribes; nay, it was this wisdom which was incarnate in Jesus Himself. No longer something abstract and intangible, this Wisdom had taken flesh and blood; it had entered the world of sense; it had displayed itself in acts which struck upon the eye, and in words which fell upon the ear; this eternal Wisdom, born of the Virgin in the fulness of time, crucified, buried, risen, ascended, is at once the teacher and in the main the substance of the Christian creed; and of this, too, it is true that Wisdom is justified of her children. When men now-a-days reject Christianity, they reject it, as a rule, bit by bit. They first find one truth incredible, then another; until at last, so far as their minds are concerned, the whole edifice of faith is crumbled away. There are several records of the beginning, the progress, the consummation of this work of ruin in individual minds, and one feature which may strike us as common to these records is this. A single truth, say the grace of baptism, is supposed to present unsurmountable difficulties. What always, or almost always happens, is that that truth is detached from the general body of Christian doctrine. It is treated as a thing complete in itself, having no necessary relation with other truths; it is taken to pieces, and then, for whatever reason, pronounced incredible. And what wonder? It is subjected to a strain which it alone was never meant to bear: it is placed under conditions which, except in the mind of its critic and rejector, do not anywhere belong to it. Most assuredly the truths of the Christian creed may not be treated as such detached isolated items; they are parts of a great whole; they shade off one into another by

almost imperceptible gradations; they are linked one to another by common underlying principles, by laws of contrast, or by laws of correspondence. They are just as much a whole as is the world of physical nature, only, of course, they are infinitely grander and more overwhelming; and that eternal Wisdom whose mind they are, and in whom they harmonise, reaching across them from end to end, mightily and smoothly and sweetly ordereth all things. In the light of that all-comprehending, all-combining wisdom, the claims of the separate truths which compose it are indeed sufficiently justified. Take the awful truth of the punishment of the lost as taught by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Treat it as if it stood alone, as if it were almost the only truth taught by the Gospel, and it will almost certainly be rejected; but place it in the light of the general wisdom, the comprehensive philosophy of the Christian creed, and the power of the human will to become by repeated acts determined into habits, fixed in evil, in the light of the awful holiness of God, the revelation of which is not cancelled by the revelation of His love; nay, in the light of the atonement offered for sin on Mount Calvary, the rejection of which thus echoes in the abyss beneath, deep answering to deep,—the deep of hatred to the deep of love,—and the case is very different. And so again it has been said, how can it be supposed that the destiny of a soul can in any degree depend upon a child's undergoing an outward ceremony like baptism? Think only of the rite and you well may ask, how? But suppose this is a distinctly appointed means for making us members of Christ and children of God. Suppose that He who is the Lord of matter as truly as He is the Lord of spirit has discovered to us His will thus to make the material creature

the chartered channel of the spiritual gift. Suppose that gift to be nothing less than the new nature of His incarnate Son, and the question to which I have referred is sufficiently answered. Or again, how, it is asked, can the death of Jesus Christ be properly accredited with such extraordinary efficacy as is attributed to it in the New Testament? Certainly if He who died upon the cross is only human it is folly,—it is worse, to see in His death the redemption of a guilty world. But if He is Divine, who shall say that the death of that human nature which He assumed might not have other conceivable and yet more astonishing results?

In the light of this higher wisdom of Christ's essential deity, the wisdom of that redemption is more than justified. So again with the questions that arise day by day as to the Divine government of the world. "Had I been God," it was profanely said the other day, "I never would have made a world in which such terrible catastrophes as that at Ischia were possible." Had you been God, it might have been very well answered, you would, at least, have seen further than you do. You would have known whether high moral excellence was possible among men apart from the presence, under whatever conditions, of moral evil; you would have known whether physical evil and moral evil are not intimately linked to each other, even independently of the history of our race. You would have known whether a dreadful catastrophe like this at Ischia may not have a moral and religious aspect and significance which do not occur to you as you gaze upon its surface.

The first lesson of true wisdom is the limited nature of our faculties, the reality and extent of our ignorance. It may be asked whether this justification of the eternal wisdom by His

children brings any help to those who unhappily for themselves do not believe—whether it does not leave them to their fate as if their case were hopeless, whether it does not imply that Christianity can only command the homage of hearts which are already to a certain extent in secret sympathy with it. This would be true if there were no such agency as grace, but, as it is, the Eternal Spirit is perpetually moving over the troubled waters of human thought. He is constantly playing around each single soul, He is suggesting with infinite tenderness and delicacy those modes of thought, those states of mind and conscience, which constitute the disposing for faith. Every child of man may become through His preventing and limiting grace the child of God's own wisdom. There is no compulsion exerted; we may keep that gracious influence at bay; we may in our freedom resolutely choose to remain children sitting in the world's market-place and repeating its current criticisms upon a sanctity and truth which is high above us, and which we do not understand—but this need not be.

There are two practical lessons to be borne in mind. One is that nothing is so fatal to the recognition of moral and religious truth as a scornful temper. Scornfulness blinds the eye of the soul with fatal completeness. Its telling epigrams,—“He hath a devil,” “Behold a gluttonous man,”—may command a momentary applause, but they are dearly paid for.

Secondly, wisdom may and must be won by prayer. It is the first of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which God the Father gives to them that ask Him. “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding. . . . Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and shalt find the knowledge of God.”

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING.*

“For ye have need of patience.”—HEB. x. 36.

THIS passage is interesting, if only as an evidence of the care with which the Apostles and apostolic men studied the spiritual and moral conditions of the separate Churches which were committed to their charge. They conceived of their office not as a temporary lectureship or preachingship, but as, in modern phrase, a cure of souls. Preaching was for them only a means to an end; that end the salvation and sanctification of human souls. “We watch for your souls as they that must give account.” This is the apostolic description of the apostolic office. And this cure of souls did involve incessant trouble. St. Paul described it as his crowning burden, “that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches.” Wherever anything went wrong, there the anxious eye of the Apostle rested to warn, to rebuke, to encourage to repentance and amendment.

At Thessalonica they had forgotten present duties in an absorbing interest in the second coming of the Lord; or at Rome, strong-minded members of the Church, or those who fancied themselves such, were dealing with the scruples of their weaker brethren in a spirit of trenchant and scornful indifference. At Corinth, party spirit had reached an unexampled height, and an incestuous union was actually tolerated in the men who remained members of the Church of the Apostles. In Galatia the baptized Christians were having themselves circumcised; at Colosse there was a dethroning

* Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday Afternoon, August 26th, 1883.

of the Divine Redeemer in many a man's intellect ; at Philippi there was the scandal of a quarrel between two prominent ladies, Euodias and Syntyche. And so the Apostle, dictating what he had to say in general terms to St. Luke, speaking to those of the Church who were converts from Judaism on the dangers which encompassed them, and the shortcomings which were peculiar to them, says, "Ye have need of patience."

Why did these Hebrew Christians need patience ? That is a question, the answer to which ought, by God's blessing, to be instructive to us in more ways than one. These Hebrew Christians needed patience, first of all, because they had been exposed and still were exposed to persecution, involving some degree of physical suffering. They had been on some occasions, respecting which no details have reached us, "spoiled of their goods." Probably this expression points to further violence. The mob of Alexandria was historically famous for excesses of this description. This trouble, the writer says, the Hebrew Christians had borne cheerfully, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. They had suffered, it would also seem, as objects of public ridicule. Ridicule is hard to bear ; it is hard to be identified with a cause which is treated as ridiculous ; and when ridicule is accompanied with legalized robbery, and worse things than robbery looming in the distance, then the exercise of patience seems difficult. On the other hand, it seems clear that, as yet, in this particular Church, no life had been taken. There had, as yet, been no murder,—“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood.” This is interesting, if only as showing that the Hebrews addressed in the Epistle cannot have been members of the Church at Jerusalem. Many years had passed in that Church since Stephen had sunk outside the city gate beneath

the stones of his murderers ; many since James, the son of Zebedee, had been slain by the sword of Herod. The fact that there had been no murder has a moral as well as a critical and historical interest. It showed that the persecution which called for the exercise of patience was a moderate persecution, —moderate as persecutions went in those days,—and, for this reason, patience might be more difficult to practise had the persecution been fiercer. In a persecution which enters more or less into the very fibre of a man's nature, and if active resistance is no longer possible, Cæsar knows how to bury his face in his mantle, and then how to sink with dignity in death at the very foot of his rival's statue. But a persecution which leaves life as yet untouched, yet strips it, as in Job's case, of all that ministers to comfort, of all that satisfies the yearnings of affection ; a persecution which aggravates and perpetuates suffering, while depriving the sufferer of everything that enables him to touch the confines of the heroic,—this is exceedingly difficult to bear.

The lesser trials of life often call for the exercise of patience more than the greater. Many a man will not murmur when he knows he is lying between life and death, and when those around him know that each hour may be the last. Let that same man be afflicted with less than acute suffering, with a malady which implies no danger to life, but which makes him a confirmed invalid notwithstanding, which is of such a character as to allow those who wait on him to reflect less frequently on the seriousness of his illness than on the trouble which it entails upon themselves, and patience becomes in the average case very difficult. There is here felt to be no demand for a supreme effort at self-mastery, an effort which may not be or cannot be necessary for long. There is no

sense of such support as is yielded by friends kneeling around the bedside, by sympathy stimulated to the highest point of tension. It is more difficult to be patient when the situation is commonplace than when the irritation is great.

Had the sufferings of these Hebrew Christians been more acute ; had their danger been greater, more imminent than it was, there would have been less occasion for the apostolic warning, "Ye have need of patience." These Christians needed patience for another reason. They were in great mental perplexity. The troubles of the mind often make greater demands upon us than do those of the body. We have seen they were subject to persecution from the hands of the Pagans. They lived, too, along with Hebrews, to whom they were bound by ties of blood, who resented their conversion to the Christian faith. To begin with, they would have escaped a good deal of trouble if they would have returned to the synagogue. The Jewish religion was an old and respectable religion, well known to the authorities of the Empire, and in ordinary circumstances was tolerated, if not liked. It was legally recognised, and by belonging to it a man escaped numberless annoyances. Why not, then, come back to the synagogue, to the old religion, which, besides having a recognised place in the world, was in possession of so much with which Christians had presumably parted company? Around the Jewish worship there still hovered those powerful angels who had been instrumental in giving the law. Israel could really claim a share in the great lawgiver who had mediated on Sinai between God and the people, and who, as the phrase of the Jewish schools went, was Master of the House of God ; the entrance into the holy of holies belonged to those who remained true to the faith of their forefathers.

We must try to put ourselves in the position of those to whom these words were first addressed. To those first Christian converts from Judaism they meant a very great deal. They meant an appeal to the heart as well as to the reason; they meant the re-animation of many a sacred and dearly loved association with past years. They meant not a few misgivings, in some cases, as to whether the great change which had been made from the synagogue to the Church was indeed a wise one, and would still approve itself to the conscience when life was drawing to a close. These arguments are answered one after another in the Epistles. The sum of the answer is, that in possessing Jesus Christ our Lord, Christians had a great deal more than the religion of Israel could possibly give them. Christ was greater than the angels, to none of whom, no, not to the highest, had it ever been said, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." Moses was indeed a ruler in the House of God, but he ruled as God's viceroy. Christ ruled over His own house—that which He had made and owned. If the glories of Aaron's priesthood were undisputed, Christ was also a Priest indeed, in the higher sense, after the order of Melchizedec. Christ proved from their own sacred books the relative inferiority with the priests of Israel; for to Melchizedec, the priest of some ancient theistic creed, Abraham had paid his tithes. Nay, Levi had paid tithes in the person of his forefather. The Jewish sacrifices are shadows of the realities that Christ brought with Him from heaven. That most solemn action of all, the entry into the earthly holy of holies, what was it but a figure of our Lord's entry into the inmost heaven, where His very presence is itself a work of intercession, where His great work of pleading, with which we associate ourselves when we commemorate the Holy Sacra-

ment, will only end with time itself? This was substantially the argument, but to make it their own, to master it, to take it in with all its bearings, required above all things patience. Nothing is easier than to deal with intricate, delicate, difficult, awful subjects, lying beyond the range of sensible experience, with a few flippant remarks or telling epigrams. Nothing is easier, for impatience is more natural than patience to our poor nature. Epigrams are often a welcome substitute for thought and work. To know and compare all the facts, to hold the judgment in suspense, to hesitate when the facts dictate hesitation; but when a conclusion would be a great relief, to keep the will and affections in their proper place, when the reason tries to dictate its duty to the understanding,—this is the mark of patience, and a hard work it is often. The mind has its capacities for suffering as truly as has the body, and it might well be said to these first leaders of the Hebrews, “Ye have need of patience.”

And once more the Hebrew Christians needed patience when dealing with each other. They could keep at times and to a certain extent out of the way of their Pagan persecutors, out of the way of Jewish controversialists; but they were thrown into intimate and constant contact with other members of the Church. It seems more than probable that the Church at Alexandria, like the Churches at Rome and Corinth, contained in those first ages very different elements, the co-existence of which was a trial to patience. At Rome we know there was quite a vigorous struggle between the converts from Judaism and the converts from heathenism. At Corinth, to the indignation of the Apostle, Christians went to law with Christians; “brother with brother, and that before the unbelievers.” At Alexandria, there would be, from the nature of the case,

very different degrees of attainment, and very different ways of dealing with the questions of the day. It seems that the Church at Alexandria was dull of hearing, that it needed milk when it should have been needing strong meat, that they who ought to be teachers yet needed some one to teach them. There seems to have been others to whom this description would not apply. To these, perhaps, such sentences as the following were intended to apply: "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for the feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed; and follow peace with all men." In no department of life is patience more necessary than in dealing with human character. The young, the undeveloped, the timid, claim it at our hands. No character that is worth anything develops all at once or at a single touch. It grows gradually, first from silence and reserve to decision and explicitness, and then to full productiveness and beauty.

We know there must be movement, but it is too measured, too imperceptible, for us to detect. It goes forward unremittingly; its achievements can only be measured at intervals; and so it is with the life of the soul and character. We meet the young man who is leaving school, still to all intents and purposes a boy, cheerful, without any sense of what life is, occupied, as it seems to us, with the frivolities which play on the surface; and ten years later we meet him, before he has lost the freshness of his youth, now a thoughtful man. He impresses us by his words and silence, by what he says and by what he hints at. He has an awful sense of the solemnities amid which he moves, a sense which nevertheless is balanced and harmonized with the claims of surrounding

truths and the claims of society. There has been no tremendous solemnizing sorrow ; but whence has he got it all ? It has come as the dew falls : it has come as the winter changes into spring, and the spring into summer—noiselessly, gradually, imperceptibly. There have been, perhaps, natural advantages of character, position, surroundings, and realities. But there have been obstacles arresting the growth and giving it for awhile some hindrance. The process has gone on in advancing years, for God's transforming grace has been there at work, supplying constancy, vigour, freshness, impulse. Now we see the result, and we reflect that it might have been ruined by a lack of patience. There was a time when some few bitter words might have ruined everything, might have made that man to think that nothing mattered, or that everything must necessarily go wrong ; and yet how often is patience wanting on the part of older people when they are dealing with and judging of the young. We expect the work of ten years to be crowded into ten weeks ; we expect the growth of character to reveal itself to some moral microscope, to the naked eye, when we will, like the children who pick up the early primroses once a week to see if they are taking root. Patience is necessary everywhere, nowhere more than in dealing with human character. "Ye have need of patience." Patience is an antiquated virtue, and the moral world is not disposed to welcome it. Mankind is now too progressive, too passionately bent on the well-being of the race, to have time for the culture of a virtue like this. The modern world boasts of showing excellence, patience certainly has no show. It says little ; it does little ; it waits to be roughly handled, to be thrown hither and thither ; to be set aside, perhaps to be buffeted, to be spat upon, to be crucified. And our modern

notions of manliness, conceived as the sum of human virtue, especially as set forth by an able modern public writer, has, in some respects, more in common with the old Pagan morality than with that of the New Testament. The great change which Jesus Christ introduced into men's estimate of conduct was the exaltation of the passive virtues. The old Pagan world meant by a virtuous man a strong, brave, and energetic human being, who might be, but who probably would not be, also humble, submissive, and self-subduing. Christian patience, says the Pagan world, is a slave cringing beneath the lash of his master, cringing because he is weak and ignorant.

Patience is not weakness. It is moral strength. If "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city," then surely the action of the will, as represented by patience, is higher than the determination of the will represented by physical courage. It would be far easier, I apprehend, for nine men out of ten to join a storming party, than to lie on a rack or hang on the cross without reviling. Yes, patience is strength; and patience is not merely strength; it is wisdom. In exercising it, we creatures of a day make one of the nearest approaches that it is possible for us to make to the love of God. Of God St. Augustine has finely said: "*Patiens quia æternus;*" because He lives for ever He can afford to wait. What do the mighty and incalculable periods of the past most of all suggest? The patience of God. What is the secret, think you, of the long delay of the redemption; of the partial success, of the many failures of the Christian Church; of its present failure to comprise more than one-third of the whole family of the human race? What do our own lives suggest—yours and mine—more than everything else, when we think of the gifts which He has given us, and the years during

which He has spared us, of the little or nothing which we have done for Him ; of the waste, or misuse, or abuse of His favours, which have marked our path from childhood until now ; what but the patience of the Lord ? Yes, patience is strength, and patience is wisdom, and is needed not less by us of to-day than by our predecessors of eighteen centuries ago. Is not patience the very law of our conquests in nature ? The discoveries of science have been the results of the working of a group of moral and intellectual virtues, under the presidency of patience. Why does our architecture, at its very best, fall very far short of those great creations of the days of our forefathers, who had neither our wealth, nor our knowledge, nor our resources ? There may be more answers to that question than one ; but one reason is, that we have no patience for these efforts. It took a century to build the old St. Paul's ; and we are not now satisfied if we do not see any building we take in hand finished within a few years of our life-time. Who can fail to feel the need for patience, as his thought rests on that quarter of our empire which has long been first in the thoughts of all Englishmen, to which we have turned with such varied feelings of distress, and self-reproach, and indignation it may be, and hope, and all but despair ? And as for individual life, its conditions are just as they were eighteen centuries ago. Here the modern is just as the ancient world ; sin remains, pain remains, death remains. Science has removed none of them. When each is done away with, then we may dispense with patience. Till then, patience is as necessary as it ever was. Patience is needed to enable us to meet the inevitable, and to transform it by joyfully anticipating, as the Father's will, that which else must overtake us, as if it were the iron will of relentless fate. And in this, as in all

other virtues, Jesus Christ our Lord is our highest model. Even on the solemn yearly commemoration of the battle, when the heart of the redeemed Church is full to overflowing with the cleansing power of His blood, she directs us to pray that we may follow the example of His patience. Yes ; He teaches us patience under physical suffering, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. He teaches us patience in mental trials, who in Gethsemane, of His own free will, began to be sorrowful and very heavy, so that His sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground. He teaches us to bear, if such be our lot, with the infirmities, the faults, and the shortcomings of all others, who, through His earthly life, endured the contradictions of sinners against Himself. If we fix our eyes on Him, we shall welcome circumstances in life which enable us to practise patience ; we shall be sure that they are placed in our way by a loving Father, who desires to conform us each one to the image of His Son. For we should remember that "affliction worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed," since the Divine object of hope is not far from us on earth, since He is waiting to welcome us in the courts of heaven.



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